

Benincasa Special School

Anti-Bullying Policy

2016



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Ethos

Benincasa is a school for children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In accordance with the ethos of Benincasa pupils and staff in the school have the right to:

- Recognition of an unique identity
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Learn and work in a safe environment
- Be protected from any form of abuse

Pupils and their parents or guardians have further right to:

- Individual consideration of needs by staff who have responsibility for the children's protection.
- Expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies.
- Be informed of the schools Behaviour Policy and other relevant policies including Policy on Anti-Bullying and Complaints Policy as well as the expected conduct of pupils and staff.

Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed, caring and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell knowing that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively by an adult. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a staff member.

Rationale

“Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such it is an issue that must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.” (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES, 1993)

It is necessary to devise an anti-bullying policy at this time as it has been identified as a priority area by the school.

Aims

By introducing this policy, the school hopes:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying behaviour.

Contents

This policy is addressed under the following headings.

1. Definition of bullying
2. Indications of bullying
3. Strategies for prevention of bullying
4. Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying
5. Board of Management
6. Reference to other policies

1. Definition of Bullying

Dept of Education and Science guidelines define bullying as ... *repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

At our school, we understand that bullying is the systematic acts of overt and covert negative behaviour. Bullying results in untold pain and distress to its victims.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional gestures) being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber All areas of internet ,such as email & internet chat room misuse
- Mobile threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology , i.e. camera & video facilities.

2. Indications of Bullying

All staff should be vigilant for signs of bullying. A pupil may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence

- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries him/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has monies continually "lost"
- 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 mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

3. Strategies for Prevention of Bullying

Positive School Climate

'At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual...' (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993).

Benincasa School endeavours to foster a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents/guardians in the following ways:

- A strong sense of community and cooperation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents/guardians will be developed, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying.
- Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti-bullying policy.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying policy will be discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents/guardians are asked to contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

Raising Awareness

Each school must raise the awareness of bullying in its school community so that they are more alert to its harmful effects. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

The school will emphasise that bullying behaviour is unacceptable by:

- Using assemblies to remind pupils of the school's anti bullying policy
- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable; visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games
- Special events such as a Friendship Week
- Devising a school charter for display in classrooms and other prominent locations

4. Procedures for Dealing with Incidents of Bullying

Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

Child to Child Bullying

Stage One

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the self esteem of each party involved in an incident. When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents he/she will start a record of such incidents. The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

When a decision is made to keep a record of incidences, parent(s)/guardians will be informed. Parents/guardians may also be requested to keep a written account of information they receive from a child.

When starting to explore an allegation of bullying it is important to be consistent in the way information is collected and processed. The following six questions, asked in a sensitive way, will provide a framework for discussion. The school's standard reporting form for recording incidents of bullying will be used.

- What happened?
- Who was/is involved?
- Where did it take place?
- When did/does it take place?
- Does the incident indicate that bullying was taking place and, if not bullying, what is the nature of the difficulty?
- What is required to try to resolve the difficulty now and in the future?

Assessing the Nature of an Incident

When trying to assess the nature of an incident and the type of responses needed, the following factors should be taken into account.

- Has the pupil who is experiencing the distress been subjected to repeated incidents of unacceptable behaviour? If 'yes' over what time period has the behaviour been occurring?
- Is there evidence that the behaviour is planned/pre-meditated?
- How does the pupil seem to perceive him/herself in relation to those allegedly involved?
- How distressed is the pupil and what effect is the situation having on his/her self-esteem, feelings about school, motivation, relationships with peers, physical well-being etc.?
- Which pupils are involved in the alleged incident?
- What is the age of the pupil(s) concerned?
- What seemed to trigger the difficulty?
- Where did/do the alleged incidents take place?
- Is there background to the alleged incident(s)?
- When was the alleged incident first reported? Who reported it and to whom?
- Are there any witnesses and how do they perceive the alleged incident?
- What explanations do they give for the alleged difficulty?

Procedures for Dealing with Incidents

If the investigation shows that bullying has taken place, the following should be explained to the perpetrator(s):

- Explain that the incident will be recorded and why.
- Make it clear that the type of behaviour exhibited is totally unacceptable in any circumstances.
- Explain to the perpetrator that his/her actions have an adverse effect on the victim and help him/her to consider the consequences of what he/she has done.

Disciplinary and Support Procedures

Disciplinary procedures against the perpetrator(s) are intended to change or modify behaviour. These strategies may include:

- Circle Time activities
- Positive behaviour strategies
- Setting of positive behaviour goals
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Daily conduct sheets/home-school diary
- Mentoring' or 'buddying' system

- Peer mediation
- Setting up social skills groups
- Class, group or individual discussion with staff about the effects of bullying, discrimination or racism

Support for the victim(s) is essential both immediately following the incident and during an agreed period of review. These strategies may include:

- Circle Time
- Peer support
- 'Mentoring' or 'buddying' system
- Staff support
- Parent support
- Outside agency support

It may be that parents/carers (victim and perpetrator) will require support from the school and/or other agencies.

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, staff should proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The Principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings.

The child who is bullying will be placed on report. This means that the child's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. The child has three meetings with his/her teacher and together they decide on what is to be written for that part of the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The purpose of this report to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour.

The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential. Initially a review of the reports will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the Principal, teacher, parents/guardians where possible, and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon.

The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class, or other strategies.

Stage Three

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal, in consultation with the parents and the Board of Management.

Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child.

Other responses which may be used include:

- Assertiveness training (victim)
- Use of report
- Involvement of external agencies
- Monitoring by Social Care Worker
- Peer support/peer mentoring
- Formal recording (racism, homophobia)
- Use of Behaviour Contract
- Liaison with parents/guardian/social worker
- Internal exclusion
- Fixed term suspension (in line with NEWB Guidelines)
- Permanent exclusion (in line with NEWB Guidelines)

Bullying by Adults

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, Benincasa will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (c2) of the INTO booklet: 'Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations'. A copy of this document is available for free download on the INTO website. The school policy on Positive Staff Relations outlines procedures in this regard.

In the case of **Teacher – Child bullying**, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child if possible and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation. The Complaints Procedure, as outlined on pages 155-157 in the Board of Management Handbook, will be followed.

In the case of **Parent – Teacher** bullying, the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing. The Complaints Procedure will be followed

In the case of **Parent/Visitor to the school – Child** bullying, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved. The Complaints Procedure will be followed.

In the case of **Principal – Parent/ Child** bullying, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The Complaints Procedure will be followed.

Cyber Bullying

Understanding Cyber-Bullying:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone and or the internet) to abuse another person
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people
- Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.
- While bullying involves a repetition of unwelcome behaviour the **Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013**, states:
2.1.3. In addition, in the context of these procedures placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where

that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

What is Cyber- Bullying?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

- **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is
- 'Bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology)
- **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
- **Mobile phone calls** – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible
- **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name
- **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room
- **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools
- **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo (which works by signing on in one's school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace – although there are others.

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

- **'Flaming'**: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language
 - **'Harassment'**: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
 - **'Cyber Stalking'**: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety
 - **'Denigration'**: 'Dissing' someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
 - **'Impersonation'**: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets her/him in trouble or danger, or damages her/his reputation or friendships
 - **'Outing and Trickery'**: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online
 - **'Exclusion'**: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, like a 'buddy list'
- This list is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change.

Aims of Policy:

- To ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated
- To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber-bullying
- To ensure that reported incidents of cyber bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly.

Procedures to prevent Cyber- Bullying:

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying through the use of appropriate awareness-raising exercises
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), assemblies, friendship week activities and other curriculum projects

- The school will engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on cyber bullying for 5th and 6th classes annually. Classes 1st to 6th will participate in the 'Bullying in a Cyber World' programme.
- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) will assist in learning about current technologies
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying
- Pupils will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract
- Parents will be expected to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract prior to enrolment and to discuss its meaning with their children
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly
- Procedures in our school Anti-bullying Policy shall apply
- The police will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content
- This policy will be reviewed annually. Pupils, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and any related school procedure

5. Board of Management

'The Board of Management has a role to play in the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour in a school. It should be supportive of the Principal Teacher in the application of a fair code of behaviour and discipline within the school' (Circular 20/90)

The Board of Management will review this policy on a regular basis and support the Principal in their implementation of it at school level.

6. Reference to other Policies/Procedures

The following policies will have a direct link with the Anti-Bullying policy:

- SPHE plan
- Code of Behaviour
- Data Protection
- Health & Safety
- Policy on Positive Staff Relations

Success Criteria

The following will be used as indicators of success:

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils.
- Observation of behaviour in class rooms, corridors, yard.

7. Roles and Responsibility

- The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying.
- The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and is responsible for embedding anti-bullying and anti-racism in the policies and practices of the school and ensuring that school board members, staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of policies and procedures for dealing with incidents.
- The class teacher along with the Principal are responsible for recording incidents and recording the action taken, during and after the investigation of an incident.
- Every school staff member is responsible for adhering to this policy. All staff, including auxiliary and ancillary staff, have a responsibility to report any racial incident to the Principal/Coordinator. All staff need to be aware of what constitutes a bullying and/or racial incident and promote positive behaviour throughout the school. All those working with pupils must challenge behaviour and attitudes which lead to bullying, racism and discrimination prior to incidents arising.
- It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to encourage their children to behave in an appropriate manner and to adhere to the rules of the school. Parents/Guardians can also watch out from signs that their child is being bullied or bullying others. They also have an important role to play in helping to build their child's self-esteem and confidence.

Date of Ratification:

Policy Review Date:

Chairperson, Board of Management

Benincasa Special School

Record of Bullying Incident

Date & Time:		Location:	
Name of Child:		Name of Staff Reporting:	
Staff members involved:		Other children present:	
Type of Incident			
Written		Extortion	
Verbal	Isolation	Incitement	
Physical	Cyber Bullying	Other	
When did the incident occur?			
Where did the incident occur?			
Who reported the incident?			
Please indicate the investigative procedures carried out and by whom:			
After investigation was the allegation of bullying or racism substantiated?			
Yes / No			
If yes, please continue to the next section. If no, please continue to the end of form.			
If allegation was substantiated, please indicate action taken against perpetrator(s)			
Verbal Reprimand		Detention	
Peer Mediation		Internal Exclusion	
Behaviour Contract		Suspension	
Letter to Parents		Exclusion	
Details:			
Please indicate what action was taken to support victim			
Support from staff		Communication with Parent	
Support from pupils		External Agency	
Other (please specify)			
Details:			

Please indicate if any follow-up preventative work was done as a result of the incident:

Result of Student Review

ICMP Implications:

Follow up Information for Parents

Information Letter		2 nd Warning		Suspension Letter	
1 st Warning		3 rd Warning			

Signatures: