



DE LA SALLE HIGH SCHOOL
DOWNPATRICK

**ANTI-BULLYING
POLICY**

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.1 One of the school's general aims is to provide a caring, supportive learning environment for all its students and teachers free from humiliation, oppression and abuse.
- 1.2 This is a responsibility which it takes seriously and is reflected in its positive and preventative approach to the issue of bullying.
- 1.3 Prevention concentrates on the positive aim of improving relationships between students using the resources available to the school.
- 1.4 The school strives to establish a climate in which a student who is being bullied feels that it is safe to tell. Students are more likely to confide in teachers when they know that action follows the telling.

2.0 Aims:

- 2.1 To clarify for students, staff and parents that bullying is always unacceptable, is regarded by the school as a grave offence. In some instances it can have legal consequences.
- 2.2 To create a feeling of confidence and safety throughout the school.
- 2.3 To encourage an environment where individuals can grow and flourish without fear, and fulfil their true potential.
- 2.4 To emphasise the importance of and to strengthen communication links between parents and the school.
- 2.5 To foster an ethos of responsibility and caring among staff and students.

3.0 Definition of Bullying:

- 3.1 Bullying is repeated deliberate behaviour which makes others feel uncomfortable or threatened, whether this is intended or not. There are different sorts of bullying and the following are some examples.
 - 3.1.1 Physical bullying - hitting, kicking, "horseplay", stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying personal property.
 - 3.1.2 Verbal/Written bullying - verbal threats, taunting, name-calling, malicious rumours, verbal asides in class, writing on books, unkind notes, text messages, or e-mails.
 - 3.1.3 Extortion bullying - demanding money, personal property or homework.
 - 3.1.4 Gesture bullying - different forms of non-verbal, threatening, insulting or provocative gestures that carry intimidatory messages.
 - 3.1.5 Emotional bullying - being deliberately unfriendly, excluding individual from peer group, tormenting, looks.
- 3.2 Teachers and other adults need to be aware that wittingly or otherwise they may engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour by:
 - Humiliating a pupil who is academically weak/outstanding or vulnerable in other ways;
 - Using sarcasm/negative comments with regard to a pupil's physical appearance or background;
 - Using gestures or expressions, which are intimidating and threatening.
- 3.3 It must be remembered that not every action of another or others which makes a person feel uncomfortable or hurt can be described as bullying. From time to time everyone will experience occasions where they feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. The process of growing up includes learning to cope with such incidents.

4.0 Possible Signs of Bullying:

- 4.1 Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming anxious or nervous, feigning illness, loss of appetite, withdrawn demeanour etc. They may also show changes in their work patterns, may lack concentration or even truant from school.
- 4.2 Levels of self-esteem and bullying are linked. People with low self-esteem are often the target for bullying; conversely, victims of bullying can lose their self-esteem as a result of bullying. Appendix 3 gives some helpful hints on the raising of self-esteem.

5.0 Encouragement to Report Bullying:

- 5.1 Bullying is predominantly a secretive activity and adults can frequently dismiss it as merely horseplay or harmless bantering or teasing.
- 5.2 The most frequent effect of bullying is the loss of confidence and self esteem and the generation of fear which makes it increasingly difficult for students to tell someone.
- 5.3 The school emphasises the importance of and encourages the earliest possible reporting of bullying by the victim him/herself, fellow students and/or parents. Bullying should be reported to the Head of Year or to any member of staff. Sometimes students may find it easier to report an incident to another student. Specifically, you can do the following.
 - 5.3.1 Contact the school. Talk to your child's Form Teacher or Head of Year.
 - 5.3.2 Try to give the situation time to change.
 - 5.3.3 If there is no improvement contact the Vice-Principals or the Principal.
 - 5.3.4 If you are still concerned, contact the Board of Governors
- 5.4 Remember - not reporting protects the bullies and gives the message that they can continue bullying others.

6.0 The School's Response to Bullying:

- 6.1 Staff, students and parents have a shared responsibility in any proactive strategy for countering bullying.
- 6.2 Prevention and action taken in cases of reported bullying are two strands in the school's anti-bullying policy.
- 6.3 Various means are taken to help prevent the occurrence of bullying:
 - 6.3.1 The academic as well as the pastoral curriculum is used to raise awareness of and to develop anti-bullying attitudes, values and skills among the students - in poetry, prose, drama, role play, surveys etc.
 - 6.3.2 The pastoral programme for each year group includes work to help students improve their self esteem and social skills and to encourage them to have the self confidence to reject bullying behaviour by other people.
 - 6.3.3 Peer-group pressure and peer mediation is used to discourage bullying and students are helped to become more assertive without using threats and violence.
 - 6.3.4 All adults in the school play a vital role as role-models as reflected in their treatment of students and in their behaviour to each other.
 - 6.3.5 The school makes the expected standards and appropriate ways of behaving clear to students.
 - 6.3.6 The playground, corridors, toilets and other hidden corners are regularly supervised. These are places where victims are more vulnerable, and bullying is not easily seen.
- 6.4 Various actions are taken in cases of reported bullying:

- 6.4.1 Staff and supervisors report any concerns about possible bullying to the HOY
- 6.4.2 Accurate records are kept of all incidents involving bullying [EVENT LOG in Midas and TEACHER INCIDENT REPORT Form] and parents are informed.
- 6.4.3 For more serious incidents, written statements are taken from the students involved and from witnesses. The parents are then informed and all details and correspondence are kept in the "Bullying Report" Folder.
- 6.4.4 After establishing the facts about a bullying incident, the school may use one of a range of sanctions (see Discipline Policy) and consult with other agencies where necessary.
- 6.4.5 Counselling is used to support the bullied and change the behaviour of the bully.
- 6.5 It must be stated that the school's authority and power to deal with incidents occurring off campus are limited by various legal considerations.

7.0 Role of Parents:

- 7.1 Parents are expected to work in partnership with the school in order to achieve better relationships between students.
- 7.2 Parents should regularly discuss the issue of bullying with their child and contact the HOY immediately if they have even a hint or suspicion that he is being bullied - all such disclosures will be acknowledged quickly and dealt with firmly but sensitively.
- 7.3 Parents are encouraged to keep a record of any incidents of bullying: who, what, where and when.
- 7.4 In cases of serious bullying parents will be asked to take part in discussions about which strategies should be used and to support the action being taken by the school.

8.0 Monitoring and Evaluation:

- 8.1 The school's success in encouraging better relationships among its students will be evaluated by monitoring recorded incidents and by interviewing students. It may also use questionnaires to parents and students.
- 8.2 The policy will be reviewed annually by Senior Management.

Guidelines For Teachers Dealing With Victim and Aggressor

- 01) Reassure the victim that the matter has been taken seriously and will be followed up.
- 02) Explore feelings of anger, helplessness, unhappiness etc.
- 03) Get the names of all pupils involved, the alleged perpetrator, the colluders, the bystanders.
- 04) Record the names on an Incident Report Form.
- 05) Help the victim plan self-protective strategies and a response if the incident should re occur before it has been dealt with.
- 06) Each named person should be interviewed separately.
- 07) During the interview focus on the feelings of the victim.
- 08) Do not attribute blame, rather make it clear that each pupil is responsible for this state of affairs and can do something about it. Each person is asked how he/she can make the victim happier.
- 09) Responsibility for any harm/hurt/damage must be accepted by the bully and recompense made.
- 10) It is at this stage that all the named pupils should be brought together and state what each has decided to do during the next few days.

- 11) Remind the pupils of their responsibility, that you are confident that they will solve the problems and you will be looking for feedback from each, one week later. Set a date for meeting again.
- 12) Meet with each pupil, including the victim, as arranged and monitor progress.
- 13) Parents should be informed as to what is happening.
- 14) Where appropriate, referral may be made to outside agencies.

Helping Your Child with Respect to Bullying

If you find out that your child is being bullied

- 01) Don't ignore the problem.
- 02) Encourage your child to talk to you about his feelings – tell your child you are always willing to listen.
- 03) Try not to over react, even if you are furious – it might frighten your child into silence. The aim is to have victims talk, and not retreat into silence.
- 04) Ask your child if he has any suggestions about changing the situation.
- 05) Find out how fearful your child is and make sure that he/she feels protected.
- 06) Take any threats of suicide or other desperate pleas seriously and seek help. It is better to be safe than sorry and children and young people sometimes go to extremes if they are miserable.

Your GP is always the most convenient contact.

- 01) Help your child develop a sense of humour as a way of “throwing off” taunts.
- 02) Praise your child. Tell him how much you love and support him.
- 03) Try to sort out the bullying at first as quietly and as constructively as possible.
- 10) Contact the school. Talk to your child's Form Teacher or Head of Year.
- 11) Try to give the situation time to change.
- 12) If there is no improvement contact the Principal or his Deputies.
- 13) If you are still concerned contact the Board of Governors – the school can tell you how to do this.
- 14) If you feel confident enough you may wish to contact the parents of the other child – this obviously depends upon the family of the bully. Check out the situation before getting involved.
- 15) If you feel that your child needs legal advice contact the appropriate authorities.
- 16) If your child has been injured or threatened you can contact the police.
- 17) Encourage your child to develop new interests, which might lead to a supportive group of friends – in school and out of school. New interests can improve self-confidence and give an opportunity to meet new people.
- 18) Help your child develop coping strategies. For example
 - a) Practice saying “No” - do it in front of a mirror. It puts a bully off if you shout “No” and walk away.
 - b) Walk confidently. Walk tall. Do not slouch. Do not hang your head. Take deep breaths.
 - c) Draw or write about feelings. Such activities can give victims the opportunity to “get their feelings out.” This also enables children to keep a safe distance from frightening events and emotions and gives them a chance to work on ways of dealing with them.
 - d) Keep a diary of progress. This is a diary of achievement you can read with them.
 - e) Role-playing. Act out the threatening situation and practise responding calmly and firmly.
 - f) Ignore the bully. Pretend not to be upset. Turn and walk quickly away.
 - g) Use humour. It is difficult to bully a child who refuses to take the bullying seriously. This may not be an option if your child is being physically threatened.
 - h) Although it may appear unfair, you may have to tell your child to avoid places where bullying takes place.
 - i) There is safety in numbers. Tell your child to stay with groups of children.

If you find out that your child is bullying others

- 01) Ask your child if he can explain what has happened and why. Try not to be too judgmental at this point.
- 02) Talk to your child and try to find out if there are ways in which you can work together to stop this behaviour.
- 03) Explain that the bullying must stop and that the situation could become worse if it does not.
- 04) Explain how frightening the bullying is for the victim. Try to encourage your child to try and imagine him or herself in the place of the victim.
- 05) Criticise the bullying behaviour but do not reject your child or label him/her a bully. "What you did was wrong" not "You are a bully"
- 06) Look for good behaviour from your child and praise it even if it is something small.
- 07) Tell your child that you know that they can change this bullying behaviour. Give your child the confidence to try to change.
- 08) Help your child to develop and/or friends away from the "bully gang". Work on improving social skills - how to approach people, how to say nice things, how not to react if he or she is angry.
- 09) Try to spend as much time as possible with your child. Listen to his/her concerns. Sometimes children bully other children as a way of getting attention.
- 10) Make it clear that you do not accept bullying behaviour and that there will be consequences at home such as no television or loss of privileges if the bullying does not stop.

Appendix 2

Building Your Child's Self Esteem

Things to Do

- 1) Praise your child frequently. Make sure it is not false praise.
- 2) Give lots of unconditional love. Tell him you love him.
- 3) Compliment your child's appearance. "That shirt looks good on you" / "That colour really suits you."
- 4) Spend time with your child. Some positive attention every day will help.
- 5) Play down your child's failures. "Just a bit of bad luck. Don't worry." Do say if your child needs to prepare more or plan better the next time.
- 6) Let your child make decisions and take responsibility. Self-esteem improves when children take some control over things in their lives.
- 7) Make a list of all the positive things you can think of about your child. Show it to him.
- 8) Set your child up to succeed. Try to arrange situations where your child will shine or do well.

Things to Avoid

- 1) Do not set unrealistic expectations. More failures will only increase his/her misery.
- 2) Do not continually criticise or put your child down.
- 3) Do not be put off if your child rejects your praise and compliments. It is still soothing the wounds.
- 4) Never give up. It takes a long time to build or rebuild self esteem.

- 5) Never forget that a child needs a parent with good self esteem. If you have not got it, get to work on yourself.

Points for Children to Remember

- 01) No one is perfect. We all have doubts about ourselves from time to time.
- 02) It is natural to make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. Forgive others their mistakes.
- 03) It is OK to try and fail. That is how we learn.
- 04) Be kind to yourself. Do not beat yourself up.
- 05) You are a good person. There are lots of things you can do in life and do well.
- 06) No one is good at everything. Focus on your good points, not your bad ones.
- 07) Tell yourself "I am a good person" at least five times a day.
- 08) Laugh at yourself. Have fun and enjoy life.
- 09) You can work things out. Most problems are solvable.
- 10) Your parents think you are wonderful. They are there for you. Talk to them. Confide in them and let them love you.