



# Anti-bullying Policy

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## 1. Introduction

At Castlebar our anti-‘bullying’ policy reflects the expectations of positive pupil behaviour in all settings as made explicit in the school’s behaviour management policy and in the guidelines for teaching Personal and Social Education. It also acknowledges the need for staff to understand ‘bullying like’ or ‘targeted’ behaviour may be more to do with pupils learning disability that prevents them from communicating how they feel; their difficulty in empathising with others; poor social skills or low self-esteem rather than a deliberate intention to ‘harm’ someone.

## 2. Aim

The aim of the policy is to ensure that all children learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being ‘bullied’. To facilitate this most children receive clear, explicit and repeated teaching to help them understand what is socially acceptable behaviour, and what is not, and to develop relationships with others. Throughout the school children continually learn what is the right, and wrong, way to behave through boundaries and parameters set by others and begin to see how their actions have consequences for themselves and for others.

## 3. Understanding Bullying

Bullying is a subjective experience and can take many forms, making it very difficult to define. Most people, however, would recognise bullying as deliberately hurtful behaviour towards another child repeated over a period of time. Such behaviour where the perpetrator targets a particular pupil continuously is a rare occurrence at Castlebar. What has been agreed by staff is that if a child **perceives** difficult, negative behaviour of another towards him or her as ‘bullying’ and feels intimidated, anxious and unsafe as a result, then the school has a statutory duty to respond to that **perception**. It is important for staff to recognise the impact this perception could have on the child and to ensure their personal, social and emotional well-being is not affected. This will be addressed by the learning in the classroom, relevant small group interventions, parental support and ongoing observation and feedback from the pupil.

All staff, governors and parents/carers need to be aware that difficult, negative behaviour shown by children with complex needs towards others and often misinterpreted as ‘bullying’ usually falls broadly into 3 types:

- *physical* e.g. hitting, pinching, kicking, spitting, punching, pushing, biting, pulling (hair) stealing, damaging/hiding someone’s things and making unwanted sexual contact
- *verbal* e.g. name calling, teasing, making racist remarks and comments about appearance
- *Psychological/emotional* e.g. excluding someone from a friendship group, spreading rumours, not talking to an individual, threatening and tormenting

All staff, governors and parents need to be aware of the possible reasons why some children display socially unacceptable behaviour such as:

- developmental delay resulting in low level of cognitive and social functioning
- attention seeking
- poor self-image
- frustration arising from inability to communicate
- learned behaviours, copying peers /adults
- difficulty in understanding that they are hurting others
- adopting persona of character from TV/computer games or acting out images seen leading unintentionally to ‘rough playing’, difficulty in distinguishing fantasy from reality
- lack role models at home

All staff, and parents need to be aware of possible reasons why a child may occasionally display ‘targeted’ behaviour for example:

- changes in family circumstances

- out of sheer frustration may uncharacteristically ‘lash out’ at another child when they feel that the behaviour of the perpetrator has not been adequately dealt with by adults
- discrepancy in boundaries imposed in school and at home
- encouragement from home to be assertive in a physically aggressive way/ stand up for themselves
- may be bullied at home and want others to feel bad as well
- due to a repeated reaction given in response to the targeted behaviour

Children with SEN or disabilities can often lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents so it is important that staff are alert to the potential bullying this group faces and that their mechanisms for reporting are accessible to all. All staff should be aware of the signs and symptoms that indicate pupils feel unsafe in the presence of certain other children for example:

- reluctance to come to school, go in the playground,
- want parents to bring them to school/collect them rather than go on bus
- crying, mood swings
- bruises, marks on body
- wanting to go indoors at playtimes, going to the toilet frequently
- stay near adult or find secluded part of playground
- low self esteem

It is important that all staff behave as role models to help children learn to be kind and tolerant towards each other. Staff must avoid making sarcastic and derogatory comments and refrain from dominating and humiliating behaviour at all times. This also includes not encouraging children to retaliate in the same manner towards the perceived offender or use the term ‘bully.’

## 4. Positive Strategies

**Positive strategies to encourage good behaviour in the classroom and in the playground so that children can work and play in an atmosphere of trust and co-operation.**

- School rules displayed in classrooms with symbols so children are constantly reminded of what kind of behaviour is clearly expected from them.
- Behaviour management plans to promote consistent approach by all staff when dealing with difficult behaviours of some children.
- Children to be set achievable tasks/goals and given lots of praise and rewards to improve self-image.
- Effective classroom arrangement/seating positions; use of screens, workstations, individual schedules (TEACCH approach) to help focus children on work.
- Opportunities in PSED curriculum for children to explore ways of developing better relationships with each other through circle time activities, discussions, role-play and assertiveness training. Use of PSED resources designed specifically for children with Autism to help them understand social situations e.g. social stories.
- Extra responsibilities/movement breaks for children with short concentration spans.
- Wall of Good work, weekly Good Work/Behaviour assembly where considerate behaviour to others is publicly recognised.
- Improved playground supervision through the staggering of lunchtimes and deployment of staff on premises e.g. all areas of playground ‘patrolled.’
- Signs with playground rules displayed to remind children to take turns, pass the ball, use kind words etc.
- Improved playground provision to engage children in purposeful and stimulating play activities in a supervised and structured way. Members of school council (playground buddies) and adults to show/help children play games. Zoning areas of playground is currently under discussion for e.g. quiet play, team games, individual activities, bike track.
- Children to be free to play alone, in groups, and with support and have access to different areas of playground.
- Behaviour Management Plans to help some children manage their less structured time out on the playground.

## 5. Bullying Procedures

### Procedures for responding to incidents of negative behaviour.

- When dealing with incidents of negative behaviour all staff to remain calm and in control, keeping language simple, clear and appropriate.
- A range of motivators or planned strategies will be used throughout the day to support individual children.
- Team Teach techniques are used for positive handling and to diffuse potentially 'explosive' situations when required.
- Class teachers who know their pupils well are to judge how serious negative language or behaviour used is and how it affects others before applying sanctions. For instance a younger child may swear not knowing what the words mean but may know such words provoke a reaction. In this case it may be beneficial to ignore it. On the other hand the response to an older child who verbally abuses another child/adult may be to remove him/her from the situation depending on individuals and behaviour management plan strategies if relevant.
- Any pupils with concerns around behaviour will have a Behaviour/Sensory Plan in place to ensure a consistent approach is used supporting the individual child.
- In the rare event of a child 'targeting' another individual, planned strategies will be used in an attempt to decrease the negative behaviour. Behaviour Management Strategies will vary depending on the perpetrators understanding and the cause of the negative behaviour.
- In rare cases individual children will be given 1:1 support to ensure the safety of themselves and other adults and pupils.
- **Any children who are perceived as being targeted would be given individual support and parents would be informed – staff would share strategies used in school to support the child's personal, social and emotional well-being.**
- **Staff will work alongside the 'targeted' child to ensure they have an understanding of what is happening and why and to teach them a range of coping strategies if appropriate. Staff would work to raise the self-esteem of the child to ensure the repeated behaviour does not affect their overall confidence, happiness or learning.**
- In the case of repeated or ongoing behaviour class staff will record the incidents through the use of an ABC chart to attempt to gain a better understanding of the cause of a repeated behaviour. These ABC charts may then be used to plan further advice and support given from the Behaviour Focus Team.
- Any repeated incidents around negative social interactions would be followed up in class through specific PSED lessons.
- The use of social stories are used to further support pupils where appropriate.
- During pupils movements around the school including arrival and end of day routines, lunchtimes and assembly times, pupils are to be supported by class staff or known adults.
- In the event of an incident occurring where adults are unfamiliar with the individual child they will use positive behaviour strategies and Team Teach techniques if required to diffuse situations and will report back to the class staff.
- Depending on the needs of the children concerned the following sanctions to be applied when on the playground (Staff to follow advice from class staff for individual children – advice shared frequently in briefings):
  - Verbal warning/reminder of rules
  - Asked to stand next to the wall for 3-5 minutes or stay with adult if tendency to run away, thereby be given some time out.
  - If behaviour persists child should be removed from main playground. Older children whose difficult behaviour is seriously affecting others to have playtime reduced or have a separate area to play and be supervised.
  - Staff member to inform class teachers of any incidents dealt with.
- Class teachers to record incidents, share information with colleagues and inform parents when appropriate.
- Parents of children with persistent negative behaviour to be asked to come to school to meet class teacher/SMT and discuss strategies that could improve behaviour – the ABC charts may be used to support discussions.
- In the very unusual event of sustained and constant bullying, a pupil may be excluded from school either temporarily or permanently.

## 6. Recording and monitoring

The GB Pupil and Parents committee are recording and monitoring incidents of bullying. They normally receive verbal feedback as incidents of conscious and sustained bullying almost never happen.

## 7. References

This policy is based on DfE guidance “Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies” which was last updated in July 2017:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

It also takes into account the DfE statutory guidance, “Keeping Children Safe in Education” 2016.