

SCOIL ASSAIM ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Introductory Statement and Rationale:

All children in Scoil Assaim have the right to be educated in a safe and caring environment. Our school is a caring community, a place where every pupil is valued equally. This policy was developed following consultation with Scoil Assaim staff and pupils to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

The Anti-Bullying Policy was reviewed and updated in October 2020.

Aims:

- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- To increase children's awareness of bullying, through a set of lessons available to all teachers. Each class will cover a series of lessons dealing with bullying during the school year
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's approach to handling bullying behaviour

What is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour which is hurtful, deliberate and repeated often.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Cyber

Bullying can involve intimidation, aggressive behaviour, isolation, name-calling, demands for money, and insulting remarks.

Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved; it affects everyone in the classroom, in the school community and, ultimately, in the wider community. It is recognised internationally that bullying behaviour is not confined to pupils and schools alone; it is prevalent in society, in the workplace and in the home.

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness against the power being exercised by the bully; a high degree of collective vigilance is needed if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour:

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect, changing route to school, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, missing
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school
- pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or school holidays
- visible signs of anxiety or distress: stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers
- possessions missing or damaged
- increased requests for money or stealing money
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him

These signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. However, if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

The Bully:

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour.

Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse and often convince themselves that the victim deserves the treatment meted out.

Pupils who bully can also be attention-seeking; they may set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware of, or indifferent to, the victim's feelings. Some may seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others.

Guidelines for Teachers in Scoil Assaim:

- Each teacher will conduct a series of lessons throughout the school year to raise awareness of bullying, develop coping skills etc. Each teacher has a book containing lessons suitable to her/his class (See SPHE Plan)
- The following procedures will be followed by teachers when a bullying incident arises:

- Attend to what is being said without displaying shock, disbelief or undue emotion
- Accept what is being said but do not necessarily believe all you hear
- Meet with the bully and the victim separately
- Take notes. Teachers should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. A folder will be distributed to each class specifically for noting bullying incidents
- Children will be encouraged to draw or write their account of the incident(s). Photocopiable sheets for this will be placed in the folder
- Arrange a meeting with the parents/guardians of all parties involved and present the facts gleaned from the children
- Inform the Principal of the situation and ensure that the agreed guidelines are being adhered to
- Arrange follow-up meetings/calls with the parents/guardians involved
- If it is discovered, following the above consultations and meetings, that the bullying has not ceased, the Principal will be informed. A meeting will then take place to decide what further action will be taken

Success Criteria:

- Feedback from pupils, teachers, SNAs, and parents
- Reduction in number of incidents of bullying

Implementation and Review:

This policy was reviewed and updated in October 2020. The next full review will take place in October 2022.

The guidelines in the policy will be reviewed informally during each school year to ensure that all staff in Scoil Assaim are aware of, and adhering to, the agreed procedures.

This policy is available to read on the school website; parents may request a printed copy from the school secretary: secretary@scoilassaim.com

Scoil Assaim Board of Management, October 2020