

Investigating and Resolving Bullying in School

Further steps for relevant teachers



Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

February 2014

Amended from HSE Cool Schools Anti-Bullying Programme and in accordance with Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Introduction

The Cool School Programme is an Anti-Bullying Initiative for Post-Primary schools developed within the North Eastern Health Board's Child Psychiatric Service. It is supported by assistance from the N.E.H.B. Health Promotion Unit, and the In-Career Development service of the Department of Education and Skills.

The impetus for partnership between Health and Education in this initiative arose from the significant effects bullying has on the wellbeing of young people, and on their progress in school. Significantly, these effects can also last into adulthood, causing depression and poor social development.

They include:

physical injury, headaches, stomach aches, stress symptoms such as sleep problems, eating disorders, anxiety or panic attacks, and loss of confidence and self-esteem.

In very extreme circumstances some young people even consider suicide.

In school terms the effects are likely to include: drop-out, truancy, school refusal, low academic achievement or complete failure, exclusion and isolation.

The Programme aims to provide a support service for schools to facilitate implementation of the Department of Education's Guidelines on Anti-Bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

This booklet offers advice for teachers on how to proceed if a young person takes the very brave step of asking for help.

Given the atmosphere of fear and secrecy which surrounds bullying, and the fact that adult intervention is almost always necessary to stop it, it is crucial that the confidence placed in a teacher by a pupil is reciprocated by an unequivocal response.

The guidelines therefore, offer a structured way of providing support which is teacher friendly, while at the same time covering the main issues involved.

Relevant Teachers

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013 each school must identify a person or persons who have primary responsibility to investigate all reported incidents of bullying.

The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Decide who to consult

Be clear what your school's procedure is. Information and advice may be forthcoming from the following:

- Class tutor
- Year-head
- Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator or Team
- Management
- School counsellor
- Parent/s of victim
- Parent/s of alleged bully
- Outside agencies (eg, Educational Psychologist, Gardai).
- Once you have consulted the appropriate person/s in your school, the following guidelines may inform your next steps.

Decide who to interview

Witnesses (*Primarily other pupils, however teachers or other staff may also be in a position to help*).

Alleged bully or bullies.

It may also be helpful to speak to pupils who are not involved. Their contribution may be unbiased and may add perspective to the situation. A useful question to ask in this context- "Is anybody in your class getting a hard time?"

Seek answers to: What? Where? When? Who? Why? How?

Take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach. Deal with conflict in a non-aggressive, non-confrontational manner.

Where it has been determined that bullying has occurred

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, 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.

DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Post-Primary Schools, sept 2013

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

In cases where it has been determined by the **Year Ceannaire or Pastoral Care Officer** that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;

Where the **Year Ceannaire or Pastoral Care Officer** has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

Resolve the problem

Victim and Bully

Many bullying incidents can be resolved by explaining to the bully what is wrong with their behaviour, and how it is affecting the other person. In the vast majority of cases an agreement to stop, and an apology to the victim will be forthcoming. Bringing the different parties together to achieve a reconciliation can have a very positive outcome for both pupils.



Parents and Bully

In cases where the bullying requires the imposition of sanctions, the co-operation of parents is crucial. The school's anti-bullying policy and code of behaviour need to come into play, particularly where the safety of other children is at risk. Agreement should be sought from parents and the pupil responsible in relation to future behaviour.

It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Post-Primary Schools, sept 2013

Parents and Principal

In the case of a very resistant bully, planning steps to intervene may take more time. The school management may need to be involved in resolving the difficulty.

Additionally, in all serious incidents of bullying and also if after 20 days there has been no improvement in a student's bullying behaviour for all other incidents of bullying the principal will formally request parents to visit the school and will make a report to the schools board of management and may make additional referrals where appropriate



Follow-up

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect; students involved will follow the Meas programme as developed by the school.

In cases where the **1st Year Ceannaire** considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the **1st Year Ceannaire** in the recording template in **Appendix B** and passed on to the principal with appendix A

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the **1st Year Ceannaire** must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

**APPENDIX A
BULLYING INCIDENT REPORT FORM COLAISTE BHAILE CHLAIR**

DATE: _____

TEACHER: _____

NAME OF STUDENT MAKING ALLEGATION: _____ **CLASS:** _____

NAME OF STUDENT ALLEGATION MADE AGAINST: _____ **CLASS:** _____

DETAILS: Include time, place, names of alleged perpetrators, names of bystanders. Detail here both sides of the event

ACTION TAKEN eg referral, mediation, agreement, warning, sanction etc

SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW – UP

APPENDIX B
RECORD OF PUPIL BEING BULLIED

NAME OF PUPIL BEING BULLIED AND CLASS GROUP

NAME: _____ CLASS: _____

NAME(S) AND CLASS(ES) OF PUPIL(S) ENGAGED IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

SOURCE OF BULLYING CONCERN/REPORT

(TICK RELEVANT BOX(ES))

(TICK RELEVANT BOX(ES))

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other _____	

LOCATION OF INCIDENTS

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other _____	

NAME OF PERSONS WHO REPORTED THE BULLYING CONCERN

--

TYPE OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name Calling		Other _____	

WHERE BEHAVIOUR IS REGARDED AS IDENTITY-BASED BULLYING, INDICATE THE RELEVANT CATEGORY:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN	Racist	Membership of Travelling Community	Other _____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AND ITS IMPACT

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN

SIGNED _____ 1ST YEAR CEANNAIRE DATE _____

DATE SUBMITTED TO PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL _____