

Collaton St. Mary C. of E. (V.A.) Primary School

School policy about dealing with bullying

Our school objectives are:

- that all staff, governors, pupils and parents should have an understanding of bullying
- bullying will not be tolerated
- clear procedures for reporting bullying should be understood and followed

1. We define bullying as:

- the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. It can be:

PHYSICAL: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching or any use of violence.

VERBAL: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

EMOTIONAL: excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), being unfriendly.

RACIST: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.

SEXUAL: unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

2. We believe bullying to be a complex problem, but in order to understand how it may appear in our school and to eradicate its effects, we note the elements of bullying as:

- 2.1. the nature of bullying
- 2.2. the severity of bullying
- 2.3. the frequency of bullying
- 2.4. the motivation of bullies

2.5. the numbers involved in bullying.

2.1. The nature of bullying

It can be physical or verbal in nature. It can also include rude gestures, intimidation and extortion. The weapons of bullying can include threat and fear. Teachers need to know who is involved and stop it, without dismissing it. It is important that parents get to learn of the bullying, as they are often unaware of it. Their immediate feeling is, more than likely, helplessness.

Bullies parents' reactions are also significant. When they find out they are often unconcerned or won't believe that their children are capable of behaviour accused of.

Bullying has been shown to most often occur in school, especially the playground.

2.2. The severity of bullying

Bullying is a broad term, covering from prankish horseplay to serious assault. The effects on some children have been very serious, including some suicides. Some children have run away from home, or even murdered their tormentors.

2.3. The frequency of bullying

It can be a very frequent event and can last up to months or years. Its effects can be very serious even if they are of short duration.

2.4. The motivation of bullies

- bullies get pleasure from others pain, fear and humiliation
- even young children quickly learn that aggressive behaviour helps them get their own way
- bullies also learn that creating fear in the victim is a rewarding experience
- children model their aggressive behaviour from their parents
- prevention is better than cure

- bullying can be confused with bossiness with younger children
- boisterous play can become bullying if the play becomes intimidatory

2.5. The numbers involved in bullying

There are two groups involved i.e. directly (bullies and victims) and indirectly (onlookers). A Norwegian survey of 140,000 junior and senior high school pupils showed that 15% were regularly involved in bullying i.e. 6% were bullies and 9% were victims.

3. Bullies - their roots and identification

- 3.1. Living in an environment which teaches children that aggression and violence are the best way of getting your own way and dominating others, creates a potential breeding ground.
- 3.2. A bully's parents are most likely to speak sharply to their children and use physical forms of punishment or resort to violent, emotional outburst. The bully may not be directly involved, but may see one parent abuse the other or another member of the family. Aggression is, therefore, transmitted.
- 3.3. Other research shows that inconsistent punishment by parents can produce aggression in children.
- 3.4. Bullies are usually bigger and stronger than average.
- 3.5. They are usually older than their victims.
- 3.6. Bullies are characterised by impulsiveness and a strong need to dominate others.
- 3.7. There is a link with general anti-social, rule-breaking behaviour in school and community.
- 3.8. Bullies are often aggressive towards parents, teachers and siblings.

3.9. Research has indicated that aggressive children grow up to be violent parents and citizens. Many bullies achieve little in school, leave early and get into trouble with the law. They underachieve in school and beyond, and can become abusers.

4. Characteristics of the bullied

4.1. They often are not very different from other peers.

4.2. Often they are physically weaker and younger than their bullies.

4.3. They are more anxious and insecure than their peers, often cautious, sensitive and quiet.

4.4. The bullied can be lonely with few friends and have difficulty asserting themselves with their peers.

4.5. Victimised boys tend to have closer contact and better relationships with their parents, particularly mothers. This can be misinterpreted by others as over protection.

4.6. *"The long term effects of persistent bullying can make youngsters feel isolated and wonder what is wrong with them. They may begin to feel that they deserve the teasing and harassment, so that they become withdrawn and less willing to take social, intellectual or vocational risks"*

Tattum and Herbert, 1990, p 21.

Practicalities

Outline procedures:

1. Report bullying incidents to staff.
2. In the case of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff.
3. Parents will be informed, in serious cases and will be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be contacted.

5. The bullying behaviour and threats of bullying must stop immediately.
6. We will try to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour.
7. The bully will offer an apology and other appropriate consequences may take place.
8. In serious cases, suspension or exclusion will be considered.
9. If possible, the pupils will be reconciled.

Signs and symptoms

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- is unwilling to go to school
- begins to do poorly in school work
- becomes withdrawn, starts stammering
- regularly has books or clothes destroyed
- becomes distressed, stops eating
- cries easily
- becomes disruptive or aggressive
- has possessions go 'missing'
- has dinner or other monies continually 'lost'
- starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- attempts suicide or runs away
- has nightmares

To be reviewed Autumn 2003