

## Bullying Policy

The destructive behaviour of bullying is evident in all our schools in one form or another. It affects many children in varying degrees. They feel insecure, depressed, helpless and in severe cases, suicidal. In extreme cases, they are unable to realise their full potential. If bullying is not dealt with it can easily build up to a point where victims become so depressed that they do one of two things: lash out at someone else or hurt themselves. To be able to deal with bullying we first need to know what it is. There are two important components that constitute bullying behaviour: firstly, and most important, bullying is an abuse of power. A bully has power and control over a victim who feels helpless to deal with the situation; secondly, bullying is an ongoing and repetitive pattern of harassment and abuse. Ken Rigby (1996) defines bullying as 'repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. It is very important to distinguish between bullying and conflict. Many children involved in conflict believe that they are being bullied. To further understand bullying, we need to look at all the different role players and their contributions to the situation. Bullying involves the bully, the victim and bystanders who can either support the bully or the victim.

Having sought to understand bully behaviour we need to look at ways of addressing it in the school situation. There are many interventions and prevention strategies that can be put in place in order to assist with bullying in schools. These would include educating learners, teachers and parents as well as providing policies and particular programmes. When dealing with a particular case of bullying it is important to adopt a strategy where the children are involved in the resolution of the situation and to this end the "No Blame" approach is advocated. The process of dealing with bullying really revolves around empowering all role players to deal effectively with bully behaviour when it is encountered. An important issue which needs to be addressed in all schools is what has become known as the "Code of Silence". Learners must feel empowered to disclose issues of bullying if these episodes are going to be dealt with effectively. Dr Elizabeth Smit maintains, "Education for peace aims to empower learners with skills enabling them to play a positive role in maintaining a peaceful society. A conflict resolution programme such as mediation offers learners the opportunity to face their differences and reach their own solutions." As parents, we should be seeking to equip our children to resolve their relationship problems themselves, with our help and guidance where necessary. In this way we empower them to deal with conflict, violence and abuse in a constructive and positive manner.

### **A policy of a hurt-free environment**

To this end, we aim to establish a community in which everybody feels valued and safe, where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted. Every boy and girl has a right to enjoy their time at school. The community does not tolerate bullying or harassment. *Respect* for others is expected.

### **Footprints aims to:**

- ✓ Promote an atmosphere and ethos at the school of warm loving and caring concern
- ✓ Promote in each child respect and empathy for others and the environment.

### **Footprints opposes bullying**

#### The School

- ✓ Expects a high standard of behaviour at all times
- ✓ Aims to provide a safe and caring environment for everyone

- ✓ Has a policy for detecting, preventing and dealing with bullying
- ✓ Is educating boys and girls about issues related to bullying behaviour
- ✓ Offers support to all students through your class teacher

**At Footprints School everyone has rights and responsibilities**

**Rights**

- to be different
- to feel safe
- to learn and grow to be respected to be valued

**Responsibilities**

- to show compassion and understanding to respect yourself
- to respect others
- to use common sense
- to support others

**What is bullying?**

Bullying is any repeated behaviour intended to hurt, injure, threaten or frighten another person in such a way that the person feels that he cannot do anything about it. Bullying is a repeated abuse of power.

**What is conflict?**

In conflict the partners are frustrated and unable to communicate.

**Do you bully? Have you been bullied?**

Bullying comes in many forms, including:

- ✓ Calling hurtful names
- ✓ Being picked on
- ✓ Deliberately punching, hitting, bumping
- ✓ Teasing
- ✓ Spreading rumours about someone
- ✓ Mocking
- ✓ Repeatedly "putting down" someone
- ✓ Threatening
- ✓ Deliberately ignoring and avoiding
- ✓ Taking or damaging property

**What to do if you are bullied**

Tell the bully to stop. State quite clearly that the behaviour is unwelcome, and you don't like it.

- ✓ Walk away and stay away from the bully.
- ✓ Seek help. Talk about it to someone you trust. Report it to a member of staff, a mediator if it happens on the playground, or a senior boy or girl. The School does not tolerate bullying. Feel confident that any incident can be resolved satisfactorily.

**What to do if you know someone is being bullied**

- ✓ Care enough to do something about it whether it affects you personally or not.
- ✓ Early intervention can defuse a situation before it gets out of hand.
- ✓ Report it to a member of staff, your parents, a mediator or a Prefect.



### How staff deal with bullying – the “no blame” approach

The school will use this approach when dealing with cases of bullying:

- ✓ Interview the victim and suggest strategies
- ✓ Arrange a meeting for all involved
- ✓ Explore the problem without allocating blame
- ✓ Share responsibility
- ✓ Identify solutions
- ✓ Let the pupils take action themselves
- ✓ Follow up at a later stage

It should be noted that if the bully continues with this type of bully behaviour, more stringent sanctions will be imposed, and counselling will be suggested.

### To prevent bullying

Each boy and girl needs to:

- ✓ Respect themselves and others.
- ✓ Work to create a pleasant school environment for all.
- ✓ Learn to tolerate individual differences.
- ✓ Support the School policy on bullying.

### The school will do the following:

1. The Resilience Programme:  
In the Junior School we run a Resilience Programme that integrates the child into a group, helping others and sharing feelings. Through the programme boys and girls are prepared for understanding and controlling their emotions as well as developing strategies and words with which to deal with any bullying that may occur at a later stage.
2. The Self Awareness Programme:  
In the Junior, Intermediate and Senior Phases boys and girls are exposed to a number of interventions. These interventions are designed to assist boys and girls discover more about themselves as well as helping them deal with conflict situations using a “no blame” approach.

### What parents should try to do

- ✓ Listen to your child
- ✓ Suggest certain strategies
- ✓ Inform the school
- ✓ Let the school investigate and report back
- ✓ Allow the school to sort it out
- ✓ Support your son or daughter
- ✓ Take an interest in your child’s social life
- ✓ Encourage your child to bring friends home
- ✓ Build your child’s self esteem
- ✓ Discuss ways to respond if rights infringed
- ✓ Act by informing the school
- ✓ Keep confidentiality
- ✓ Set an example

### Helping your children to regulate their emotions

- ✓ Teach your son or daughter to identify what they are feeling
- ✓ Show them how to contain the feeling
- ✓ Give socially acceptable ways to deal with emotion

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