

# Sacred Heart Catholic Primary



## School

Information for Parents and Carers

Anti-Bullying and what to do if your child  
experiences bullying

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. It is a deliberate, repeated hostility towards a victim. It involves an imbalance of power and results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying is unwanted behaviour which is damaging to the victim.



Bullying may be targeted at the following areas:

### Emotional

Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, name calling, hurtful remarks, intimidation, leaving people out, making people feel small. This could be related to home circumstances e.g. Children in care, young carers etc.

### Physical

Pushing, kicking, hitting, or any kind of violence

### Racist

Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, hurtful remarks (Incidents related to religion or culture come under this heading too)

### Sexual

Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments based on someone's gender

### Homophobic

Disliking or fear of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). This may be passive resentment of LGB men and women, or active victimisation. People do not have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual to suffer homophobic bullying

### Transphobic

Incidents are those perceived to be insulting to someone's gender identity or to transgendered people

### Verbal

Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

### Cyber bullying

E.g. through the internet / chat rooms / MSN etc.

### Disability

Behaviour perceived to be insulting to people with a range of medical, mobility, sensory, mental health or learning impairments. This may include: Being ignored, excluded, name calling etc.

Not all aggressive behaviour is bullying. It is important to be clear about the distinction between bullying and isolated acts of aggression or hostility. Behaviour, which appears to be bullying, may be exhibited by some children, especially young children, without the intention or awareness that it causes distress. Some individuals may feel bullied, even when there is no intention from others to cause them distress. Such perceptions of bullying will nonetheless be taken seriously as a reflection of the individual's vulnerability.

### Using Pro-Active Strategies at Sacred Heart

At Sacred Heart we recognise that there may be incidents of aggressive behaviour exhibited by some children, especially very young children without the intention or awareness that it causes distress. With this in mind we have introduced and implemented preventative and pro-active strategies which we hope will reduce incidents of bullying behaviour. The following is a summary of some ideas:



### The School Ethos

- Through assemblies and the Religious Education scheme of work, 'Come and See' we consistently deal with issues of friends and relationships and seek to promote a happy school built on Gospel values
- Assemblies and Collective Worship provide opportunities for reflection and sharing of moral and social aspects of life
- All policies are formed with the School Mission Statement at the centre
- The ethos of our school is visible in the everyday relationships and life of our school
- Rewards are given to celebrate all aspects of school life and our weekly celebration assemblies praise both academic achievement and reward personal and social development
- The way we discuss incidents is always within a culture of respect, caring for each other and forgiveness.
- 
- The structures for the discipline procedure are followed appropriately and consistently Staff in all roles are welcoming, friendly, open and honest Staff are aware of family situations and show empathy towards others



## The Curriculum

- The Golden Rules include statements relating to consideration towards others
- Personal, Social and Health Education covers peer pressure, choices and bullying explicitly
- Strategies such as ‘*circle time*’ are used with whole classes as a means to explore difficult issues.
- Anti-Bullying week, held in November each year, provides a focus for curriculum work e.g. exploring bullying through drama and role play, artwork and computing
- Reading and writing stories and poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- Multi-cultural and exploration of non-Christian faiths, work e.g. work on Judaism, Islam or Hinduism



A drama lesson focusing on bullying for Year Five pupils.

## Pupil Voice

- Questionnaires are used to gather pupils' points of view regarding bullying and what we can do to improve or change things
- The School Council discusses area of school life which they wish to change and develop
- Pupils inform record keeping and are encouraged to inform staff of any problems
- Children are actively encouraged to talk to an adult if they have a problem





## Staff Role Models



- Staff are approachable and there are strong relationships between staff and pupils
- Staff respect the dignity of all pupils and of each other
- Staff are knowledgeable in their roles and know how to deal with incident
- Staff are strong role models both in school and outside of school in the community
- There is an 'open door' policy where staff, pupils and parents are able to voice their concerns
- Each playground is patrolled

by an appropriate member of staff at all playtimes. Good communication between all staff ensures that concerns for an individual's welfare are passed on and care is taken to keep an eye on the child during playtimes.

- All staff are encouraged to be vigilant for signs of bullying and to report any concerns to a teacher, the Children and Families Support Worker or the Senior Leadership Team
- Staff record incidents as per the school policy and procedure
- Staff take all concerns seriously

## Parent and Carers

- Parents and carers have input into Policy Development through questionnaires, web-site etc. so that policies are made with parents (not to them).
- The encouragement of effective communication between home and school creates strong relationships
- Parents and carers are encouraged to monitor child's use of internet and supervise as necessary
- There is an open door policy and parents are welcome
- The Children and Families Support Worker liaises with parents and carers who may need additional support
- Staff aim to achieve consistency in honest discussions with parents
- Parents and carers are recognised as the first teachers of their children
- Parents and carers may need support in handling difficult situations

## What effect does bullying have on children and young people?

The effects of bullying differ between individuals, but it is clear that bullying can be enormously destructive behaviour that in many cases has a negative effect impact on a child or young person's development.

Bullying can have a damaging impact on self-esteem and confidence and can give rise to powerful and conflicting emotions. Bullied children and young people can often feel overwhelmed by feelings of fear and anger, whilst feeling powerless at the same time.

Bullying is a very serious, frightening and distressing experience for anyone to go through. In extreme cases, some children can find life so unbearable they contemplate or attempt suicide. Many more carry the effects of bullying into their adults lives and relationships.

In any situation involving bullying, it is so important that as adults we listen to children and young people and help them to find the support that they need.



- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school
- Begins truanting
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Threatens to run away
- Become self-critical and holds a negative view e.g. ugly, stupid, failure
- Cries himself to sleep at night, unable to sleep, bed wetting
- Feels ill in the morning, headaches, stomach aches, lack of appetite
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions go "missing"
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable, angry outbursts

## How would I know if my child was being bullied?

Sometimes a child or young person will talk to you directly about bullying or tell a friend or sibling. Quite often however, children are frightened and keep bullying to themselves.

The following signs may give an indication that a child or young person is being bullied:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school

- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Is frightened to say what is wrong

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **What should I do if I think my child is being bullied?**

Bullying is a serious problem and can be very upsetting for both you and your child so our school takes reports of bullying very seriously.

Bullying is frightening and children may find it hard to talk about being bullied or bullying others so it is important that you listen to your child without interrupting and give them time to express their feelings, which may be different from your feelings as a parent. Talking about their situation and feeling listened to can lessen many of your child's worries.

Make a note of what your child says has happened, who was involved and the specific details of incidents. Be clear that it is important that the bullying stops and that the school may need to be involved.

Report the situation to a member of school staff as soon as possible and make an appointment to visit the school. It is important to explain that bullying is the reason for your request to enable the right staff members to be involved in the meeting.

The Anti-Bullying Policy will be followed by our school and copies are available on our school web site or on request from the school office.

The law grants power to schools to take action over incidents that happen away from school in certain circumstances. If the incident involves cyberbullying it is

important that your child keeps a record of any text messages, e-mails or conversations that have taken place online wherever possible. Such records can further assist our school in investigating the incident.

Give school staff time to investigate the situation thoroughly and to deal with the situation in an appropriate manner.

In the meantime keep supporting your child.

Do keep encouraging your child to continue attending school and keep in regular contact with our school. This will also help maintain any positive friendships your child has.



Praise and encourage your child and explore ways in which you can empower your child and help them to re-build their confidence. Activities which are both challenging and enjoyable can have a positive effect on your child's self-esteem and can further increase their resilience. These positive benefits may help your child feel confident enough to deal effectively with any bullying they encounter in the future. Their increased confidence may also have the effect of dissuading other children from any attempt to bully your child.



### **What can our school do?**

We have a duty of care towards your child and would wish to be helpful once we are aware that there is a bullying concern. A discussion with the class teacher would be a good place to start. It is important that your child knows and understands that we will take reports of bullying seriously and that we will keep your child informed about any action that is taken.

We will carry out the 'Seven Steps' approach to anti-bullying. This is the approach recommended and adopted by many schools in Wigan.





# SEVEN STEPS APPROACH

## **Step one – interview with the victim**

When the adult finds out that bullying has happened he / she starts by informing the Learning Mentor. She will talk to the victim about his feelings. She does not question him about the incidents but she does need to know who was involved.

## **Step two – convene a meeting with the people involved**

The Learning Mentor arranges to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved. This will include some bystanders or colluders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying. We find that a group of six to eight young people works well.

## **Step three – explain the problem**

She tells them about the way the victim is feeling and might use a poem, piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise his distress. At no time does she discuss the details of incidents or allocate blame to the group.

## **Step four – share responsibility**

The Learning Mentor does not attribute blame but states that she knows that the group are responsible and can do something about it.

## **Step five – ask the group for their ideas**

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier. The Learning Mentor gives some positive responses but she does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

## **Step six – leave it up to them**

The Learning Mentor ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. She arranges to meet with them again to see how things are going.

## **Step seven – meet them again**

About a week later the Learning Mentor discusses with each student, including the victim, how things have been going. This allows monitoring of the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process.

## Working in partnership with our school



If the bullying continues, please contact school to speak with a senior member of staff.

Try to stay positive and do not give up. Try to be patient – the nature of bullying can make it difficult to change the perpetrator's behaviour straight away. It may be that we are working hard to resolve the issues but have not yet up-dated you with what is happening.

Take care of yourself. Coping with your child's bullying may be very stressful, especially if it brings back memories of your own experiences. Try to make time for yourself or talk over what you feel with a friend or family member.

We understand that parents and carers may be anxious or frustrated when trying to support their child if they are being bullied. However, we do not advise any of the following:

- Encouraging your child to hit back. Retaliation can sometimes make the problem worse and can in some cases lead to your child becoming a bully or getting into trouble themselves.
- Confronting other children or their parents yourself
- Taking your frustration out on school staff by aggressive behavior or bullying them
- Keeping your child out of school

All of these responses are likely to make the situation worse.

It is our best interests to work with parents and carers, please try to be patient and work with us.

### What should I do if my child is bullying others?

We recommend that families of children who bully are recognised as needing responsive and appropriate help and that family support and community based services may need to be involved.

### Some reasons why children and young people bully others.

- They don't know it is wrong
- They are copying friends, siblings or family members
- They haven't yet learned healthy ways of interacting with others and making relationships

- They are part of a group of peers who encourage each other to bully
- They are going through a difficult time and may be acting out aggressive feelings and insecurities
- They have been or are being bullied themselves



### To stop your child bullying:

- Do not ignore the issue. Explain to your child that what they are doing is unacceptable and makes other children unhappy
- Encourage your child to empathise and consider the impact of their behavior on others. Let them know that they may end up with no real friends themselves if they continue to be unkind.
- Listen to your child and try to draw out what is upsetting them and causing their behaviour
- Discourage any other members of your family

from bullying behaviours

- Model positive social skills and thoughtful behavior for your child to copy
- Praise your child for any improvements in their behaviour. This will encourage them to stop bullying altogether
- Make an appointment with school staff to explain the problems your child is experiencing. Discuss how you and the school can work together to help. School staff can access specialist support for you or your child if that would be helpful.

### What should I do if my child witnesses bullying?

Due to the nature of bullying and the secrecy and fear involved. It can be very difficult for children who are being bullied to tell someone and to ask for help.

Children who are not directly involved, but who witness bullying have a very important role to play and the potential to have a profound impact in terms of tackling bullying.

It is vital that any bullying witnessed is brought to the attention of school staff. Sometimes young children need help to understand the effect their behaviour is having on others.

We encourage all children to support each other. Being on the receiving end of bullying can be a very lonely and frightening place to be. Children can have a very positive impact by supporting their friends or peers who are being bullied.

## **Who should I contact at school?**

Firstly speak to your child's class teacher, who will pass the information to our Children and Families Support Worker Mrs Lorna Golden.

If you feel that things are not improving, please let us know. Please speak to a member of our Senior Leadership Team:

Mrs S. Stirrup Deputy Headteacher

Mrs A. Hart Assistant Headteacher and SENCo

Mrs C. Mason Headteacher

## **What support is available?**

Seeking support when things are difficult is a positive step. There is a growing list of dedicated professional organisations that are committed to helping children, young people and adults with bullying and related issues.

### **Kidscape**

Telephone 020 7739 3300

Website: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

### **NSPCC**

Website [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### **Child Line**

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Anti-Bullying Alliance**

Website [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

### **Childnet** (for information on cyber-bullying)

Website: [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)



Jono Lancaster visits Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School