

St. Matthew's PS



Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidelines

2022

'Respect for All has a fundamental role to play in helping us realise our vision for all children and young people. It provides a holistic framework for all adults working with children and young people to address all aspects of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. Respect for All reflects Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and recognises that bullying impacts on wellbeing. In order to thrive and achieve their full potential, children and young people need learning environments which are safe, nurturing, respectful and free from fear, abuse and discrimination'.

Rationale

At St. Matthew's Primary School, we aim to foster the Catholic ethos of the school by promoting Gospel Values. We believe that the relationships within the school are paramount to our school community thriving together. These Anti-Bullying Guidelines provide guidance to pupils, staff and parents and carers on preventing and responding to any bullying behaviour in line with East Dunbartonshire's Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidance for Education Establishments (2022).

The success of any anti-bullying policy requires a clear response for schools and guidance on how to prevent, respond to and reduce bullying behaviours. Current research has shown that bullying is a likely cause of stress for children and young people and has a direct correlation with poor mental health.

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting and promoting children's rights and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**. All children and young people have these rights and should respect the rights of others. The UK has ratified the UNCRC and Scotland participates in reporting every five years on its implementation of the convention, including its action on anti-bullying.

Aims

The aims of the St. Matthew's Primary guidelines are to ensure:

- that all children and young people are provided with a safe, inclusive and supportive environment in which to learn;
- children and young people, parents and carers and staff have a robust understanding of what bullying behaviour is and the action which will be taken when it is witnessed or reported.
- a culture is promoted where bullying is recognised as being unacceptable;
- the prevention of bullying of children and young people through a range of approaches;
- effective support for children and young people and their parents and carers who are affected by bullying.

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is a combination of behaviours and impacts that can affect someone's ability to feel in control of themselves; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and, although the behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be kept up over time, by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, hitting or hurting or the fear of these.

Bullying also occurs in the virtual world which children and young people access through the Internet, via social networking (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat), computers and mobile phones. As communication can happen anywhere and at any time, often unsupervised, on-line bullying can be very pervasive and difficult to handle. However, in essence, the behaviour is the same and requires similar prevention methods. *Bullying – A Guide for Parents and Carers*, which includes guidance on on-line bullying, is available from 'respectme' – Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service on their website – www.respectme.org.uk.

Bullying behaviour may be related to prejudice based attitudes and behaviours which may compound other differences or difficulties in a child or young person's life. These include:

- homophobic bullying;
- racist bullying;
- disablist bullying;
- body image;
- religion and belief;
- sexism and gender;
- looked after children and young people;
- young carers
- socio-economic group.

When talking about bullying, it is important not to label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stay with people for life and can isolate a child, rather than

helping them to recover or change their behaviour. All children and young people need help to understand why bullying behaviour is wrong in order to help them change it.

St. Matthew's Primary School is committed to current definitions that take account of the context in which the event took place and the impact on the person who feels harm has been done to them.

It is important to have clarity about these significant events and be able to recognise and acknowledge bullying behaviours when they happen.

Bullying behaviours can include:

- name calling, teasing, putting down or threatening and intimidating by making prejudiced based remarks;
- hitting, tripping, pushing, kicking;
- taking and damaging belongings;
- ignoring, excluding, spreading rumours;
- sending abusive messages electronically, e.g. via text, emails or social networking site;
- making people feel like they are being bullied or fearful of being bullied;
- targeting someone because of who they are or who they are perceived to be.

This list is not an exhaustive list; there may be other behaviours that could impact negatively on a child's wellbeing.

Research and practice experience over time have led to an emerging understanding of bullying as a behaviour which emerges from complex social dynamics rather than solely as a characteristic of the individual. Bullying can be understood as behaviour which leaves people feeling helpless, frightened, anxious, depressed or humiliated.

It is crucial to take into account the impact that bullying behaviour has on a child or young person. **The impact an incident has on a child or young person is more important than whether it is classified as bullying.** Actions can affect people in different ways and this should be taken into consideration. The person who has experienced harm may have experienced just one event. **The impact determines the definition of bullying.** One incident is sufficient to alert adults to take supportive action.

Not every unkind behaviour constitutes bullying. Children and young people are still learning how to get along with others. They will tease each other, fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and disagree about what they like and don't like. These are examples of ordinary conflict, perhaps thoughtlessness and possibly insensitive behaviour and should be viewed as a normal part of growing up. However, if left unchecked, these behaviours can lead to bullying, making those being bullied feeling afraid, uncomfortable or unsafe in their environment. They should be viewed as an opportunity to help children and young people learn about resolving conflict and getting along with others. Parents, teachers and other adults need to model kindness, conflict resolution, inclusion and responsibility.

Prevention of Bullying

All staff working in St. Matthew's Primary will work to establish respectful and supportive relationships with children, young people, parents and carers and each other. An ethos that encourages respect, values opinions, celebrates differences and promotes positive relationships will make it difficult for bullying behaviour to occur or be tolerated. This includes approaches such as:

- buddying or mentoring;
- peer mediation
- creative and motivational ways to engage pupils and raise awareness of bullying
- anti-bullying campaigns, leaflets, posters, assemblies
- use of 'worry boxes' to report bullying incidents
- classroom practice e.g. Wellbeing resources
- an understanding of the impact and legal consequences of on-line bullying supported by community police
- establishment of an anti-bullying committee

Parents and carers should encourage and support their child to report any alleged incidents of bullying involving themselves or others to the Class Teacher or member of the Senior Management Team. They should work constructively with the establishment to find a resolution when their child has been involved in an incident of bullying behaviour towards another child or young person, supporting the anti-bullying practices, including restorative approaches, and reinforcing the values and ethos of St Matthew's.

It is expected that parents and carers should model respectful relationships with members of the school community. They should not encourage their child to take matters into their own hands or become directly involved in any way that causes the issues to escalate or cause conflict between members of the wider community.

Action

The member of staff to whom the incident is first reported, or who has witnessed the incident, should take the incident seriously. They must use their professional judgement in deciding upon appropriate action based on the impact of the bullying behaviour on the child or young person.

The child or young person who has **experienced bullying behaviour** will receive appropriate support and protection.

Examples of good practice include:

- The child or young person is taken to a comfortable place with no distractions.
- The child or young person is listened to.
- Ensure the child has access to SHANARRI wellbeing indicators to aid conversation about the allegation.
- the member of staff should confirm that bullying is never acceptable; they deserve to feel safe.

- they should be gently encouraged to talk, to find out what happened, who was involved, where and when – and notes taken by the member of staff.
- they should be asked what they want to see happen next.
- they child or young person should be kept up to date with progress.
- details of the bullying behaviour and actions taken should be recorded in the SEEMIS Bullying and Equality Module.
- the member of staff should inform parents of the incident and action taken, if it is judged to be appropriate.

When a child or young person has **displayed bullying behaviour**, a member of the management team should, based on professional judgement, endeavour to manage the resolution of the bullying incident within the school. Parents should be involved when their active support is needed to implement a resolution of the bullying incident.

Examples of good practice include:

- time should be taken to understand the reasons for the bullying behaviour.
- Ensure the child has access to SHANARRI wellbeing indicators to aid conversation about the allegation.
- The individual or group should not be labelled as ‘bullies’, name the behaviour;
- Staff should be prepared for a strong reaction from parents and carers, children and young people;
- Staff should be prepared to address prejudicial attitudes that may be behind the bullying behaviour;
- Addressing what is happening behind the behaviour, even when the bullying has stopped.

Consideration should be given to the sanctions and support given to the young person displaying bullying behaviour to ensure that interventions are intended to improve behaviour.

Such support might include:

- positive behaviour strategies with an appropriate member of staff, as agreed;
- restorative approaches;
- solution orientated approaches;
- involvement of Pupil Support Group and community police.

However, ‘where it is considered that in all circumstances to allow the child or young person to continue attendance at school would be seriously detrimental to order and discipline or the educational wellbeing of the pupils there’ (*National Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities in Managing School Exclusions, 2011*), senior managers have the power to exclude as a last resort.

Communicating Awareness

In order to tackle the issue of bullying it is essential that **everyone within the school community** is aware that **bullying is never acceptable** and what action should be taken if they are subject to, or witness, what might be a bullying incident.

At St. Matthew's Primary School, we will:

- establish an ABC (Anti Bully Committee)
- consult with pupils, parents and staff to regularly review and update our Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidelines
- display relevant Anti-Bullying information around the school
- encourage the development of an environment in which children and young people feel free of bullying and therefore thrive to their full potential
- provide support and assistance in individual circumstances as and when required
- regularly communicate with parents to keep them abreast of our work

To help raise awareness the anti-bullying committee will:

- promote friendships within the playground at break times
- create a 'worry box' so as children and young people have the opportunity to report bullying behaviour
- have an anti-bullying assembly to raise awareness

It is essential that everyone takes responsibility in creating a safe and supportive environment within St. Matthew's Primary School and we aim to achieve this by:

- supporting anti-bullying projects and nurturing a positive ethos of respect for all;
- providing support in individual circumstances

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

If you are being bullied or witness someone else being bullied it is **very important that you take action**: ignoring it can often mean it will get worse.

Steps you can take include:

- tell your teacher or another member of staff,
- tell a senior pupil who can then tell a teacher
- tell a parent or family member

What will we do when you tell us?

Bullying is wrong and we will always listen to any concerns or comments. It is possible to help people who display bullying behaviour to change the way they behave.

Steps we will take will include:

- maintain confidence where appropriate;
- discuss incidents with **pupils who are experiencing** bullying behaviour;
- discuss incidents with **pupils displaying** bullying behaviour;
- take appropriate action.

Review of Guidelines

Anti-bullying Guidelines will be reviewed during session 2023-24.