

Advice and Support on Bullying for all Parents/Carers



This document has been written to enhance the school's established practices in relation to bullying. It is important to note that this note is not a reaction to bullying but instead a timely reminder as we finish our Kindness Week.

In Ballyclare Primary School we focus on positive behaviour and showing kindness to one another. It is our aim to pre-empt bullying in school by developing sound attitudes in our pupils. As part of this focus, we actively discourage bullying and are continually developing the education of our children and our practices in this area. In the process we want to assure you of our stance and to engage your support.

Ballyclare Primary School's policy on bullying is coherent, structured and pro-active. It makes clear that bullying will not be tolerated and that we are committed to stopping any incidents as quickly as possible. To ensure there is a cooperative approach to anti-bullying between school and parents/carers, we have produced the following information. We hope it helps you to understand what bullying is and how to react should your child experience bullying.

What exactly is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

- Saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
- Making fun of others or calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
- Telling lies or spreading false rumours about others
- Trying to make pupils dislike another pupil/s
- Physical acts such as hitting, kicking, pushing and shoving.
- Material harm, such as taking money or possessions or causing damage to possessions
- Excluding another pupil, i.e. leaving them out of a game or refusing to include them in group work
- Using online platforms or other electronic communications to carry out many of the written acts above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images online to embarrass someone.

Bullying is frightening and demoralising and is never the bullied child's fault. Sometimes, children can be bullied because of how they look, their religious beliefs or ability. This following advice is aimed at helping you to know that you can turn to the school where bullying is taken seriously and a clear policy exists for dealing with the problem.

Is my child being bullied?

Sometimes children who are being bullied are afraid to tell anyone what is happening. They may fear that 'telling' will only make the situation worse. In Ballyclare Primary School we actively encourage pupils to share their concerns with the staff and regularly remind them who they can talk to if they have a problem.

Your child may be being bullied if they:

- Refuse or do not want to go to school (schoolwork may also deteriorate).
- Cry themselves to sleep, have nightmares or wet the bed.
- Have possessions that go missing.
- Have unexplained cuts and bruises. (It is our policy to inform parents/carers of any bumps, scratches that we are aware of.)
- Become withdrawn or aggressive, or change their behaviour in any other way.
- Ask for, or steal money.
- Are afraid to travel to school in the normal way and may ask you to accompany them.
- Have mood swings and want to be close to you.

Always remember that children may exhibit some of these behaviours for other emotional reasons. They are not always the result of bullying either in or outside of school.

How does a bullied child feel?

Bullying is frightening and demoralising and is never the bullied child's fault. A child who is being bullied may feel:

- *Angry* with the bully or the situation. This anger may be vented onto others in school or at home.
- *Anxious* about going to school or being in social situations.
- *Depressed* and feeling that no-one cares.
- *Physically sick*, such as experiencing headaches, tummy-aches and other pains.
- *Isolated* from their peers and/or family. They may wonder why this is happening to them.
- *Shy* and lacking in confidence in themselves.
- *Vulnerable* as they are always expecting a physical or emotional attack.

If your child is being bullied, you may understandably feel concerned about your child, angry with the bully and frustrated about the problem.

I think my child may be bullied, what do I do?

- Find out the facts.
- Stress that he or she needs to tell the whole truth.
- Allow the child plenty of time to explain what is happening.
- Write down what happened and when and if there were any witnesses.
- Make sure your child knows what bullying is, that it is wrong, and that no one deserves to be bullied.
- Tell the child that the situation must be tackled and not left as it will only go on.
- Reassure your child that you will do everything you can to sort out the problem and so will the school.

If you are concerned, please don't delay, to speak to someone at the school as soon as possible. This could be the class teacher, Head of Year, Vice Principal (Mr Joyce) or Principal (Mrs Mulligan). Staff are also available outside school each morning and afternoon to give advice. The school will take immediate action to protect your child and to resolve the situation in conjunction with yourself.

What if my child does not want me to inform school staff about the bullying?

- When bullying happens, parents, children and the school need to work together to solve the problem. The school is extremely committed to eradicating any form of bullying.
- It is important to explain to your child what will happen when you talk to the teacher and so promote the benefits of involving the school.

How do I approach a meeting at the school?

- Be respectful and remember that we are here to help. Aggression or over assertiveness does not help resolve any situation.
- Describe the facts about the incident/s.
- Explain how your child has been affected, what their concerns are, and what they feel might help.

- You will receive assurance from the appropriate member of staff that the matter will be dealt with and that you will be kept informed. If there is something you are not sure about ask for a clearer explanation.
- The school will impress upon you the importance of contacting the school again immediately if the problems persist.

What should I do if the bullying doesn't stop?

When an incident of bullying has been brought to our attention, we will be pro-active and endeavour to resolve the situation by stopping the problem and putting procedures in place to stop it reoccurring.

Should you feel the incident is still ongoing you may make another appointment with a senior member of staff in school.

If you find the school's response has not resolved the situation, please let us know. You may also write to the Secretary of the Board of Governors at the school.

What about the pupils displaying bullying behaviour?

As part of our approach to bullying, we recognise that those carrying out the bullying behaviour also need help. The Principal/Vice Principal will lead the response to such behaviour in line with our positive behaviour policy. We will take the most appropriate action to deal with such behaviour and advice will be sought from the Education Authority if necessary.

Please remember that if approached about your own child's behaviour, it will be on the basis of an investigation in school. The facts will have been well considered and the school will be contacting you in the aim of resolving a serious issue.

Should we contact you about your child's behaviour we will focus on discussing the facts and move forward together to resolve any situation and to point out to the child the undesirability of any inappropriate behaviour. The ultimate aim will be to quickly stop the bullying behaviour and move on without any fear of a recurrence.

We hope you find this information of value. In Ballyclare Primary School we are committed to providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment where all members of the school community feel valued. All members of that community have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. The assistance of you, the parents/carers, in this is both very important and greatly appreciated.