

ANTI - BULLYING POLICY

Few people would disagree - from reflection on their own school days, from observation or from intuitive, gut feeling - that bullying exists in our schools.

Empirical attempts to quantify precisely how much bullying goes on in our schools suggest that about 24% of school populations are involved, 9% as bullies and 15% as victims. BBC Cymru Wales reports 2 million young people suffer from bullying every year.

Given that bullying exists, what are the reasons for attempting to intervene to control the amount that takes place and reduce its incidence? They can be summarised as follows:

Caring environment

(a) Almost all schools declare their commitment in their statement of aims and objectives towards creating a caring environment in which members are encouraged to achieve their full potential. The very notion of bullying with its ethos of domination for selfish motives runs completely counter to what schools are trying to achieve.

Absenteeism

(b) Bullying is a strong contributory factor towards school absenteeism. In 'Bullying And Persistent School Absenteeism', Reid cites bullying as the most important reason given by 15% of truants for their original truancy. BBC Cymru Wales reported that 40,000 young people truant every day because of bullying related issues (2009).

Stress

(c) The stress created in the victims of bullying is a serious impediment to the learning process. Anxiety about what might happen during break or lunchtime or at the end of the school day can sometimes dominate a child's thoughts to such an extent that effective learning is non-existent. Research shows that this kind of effect can be so strong that it even survives the absence of the bully.

A social behaviour

(d) There is a strong correlation between bullying and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Pupils who are aggressive towards their peers are almost most likely to direct that aggression towards teachers, other adults and property.

For all these reasons it is important that the school clearly articulates to pupils, parents, staff and governors that bullying is behaviour that will not be tolerated.

BULLYING - WHAT IS IT?

There is a spectrum of behaviour which ranges from what most would regard as out and out bullying which few would condone, to forms of behaviour which some might consider as conflict or 'horse-play' or, to use an adolescent term, 'messaging about'.

SOME CLARIFICATION

A fair definition of the term 'bullying' would be: **'the repeated, persistent and sustained act of intimidating a weaker person; intentionally causing harm; undermining their right to dignity; through verbal harassment, physical assault or other more subtle methods of coercion.'** For our purposes, each of the following may be considered to constitute bullying:

Physical Bullying

For most people this is the form that comes to mind and can range from a punch, a push or a kick to an assault with a dangerous weapon.

Verbal Bullying

This can range from teasing and taunting to abusive comments about a person's appearance, ability, mannerisms, clothes etc. One can also include the spreading of malicious rumours under this heading.

Gesture Bullying

In the classroom the worst excesses of physical and verbal bullying are minimised by the teacher's presence, but gesture bullying can be frightening because of the implied threat of more physical violence. Gestures can also carry embarrassing sexual and racist connotations.

Extortion Bullying

Opportunities for extortion are greater in schools today than they have ever been. Pupils come with sweets, chocolates etc. for breaks and lunch; they have money for bus fares and lunches and often expensive equipment for certain lessons. All of these provide an opportunity for the bully to exert him/herself and unfortunately the bully will not be content with an isolated act. This has been minimised to an extent in Llangatwg due to cashless catering procedures.

Exclusion Bullying

This is a subtle, covert form of bullying which is particularly common among adolescent girls although boys, of course, can also isolate a targeted member of the group. The most painful feature of this form of bullying is that it is carried out by so-called friends.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when one person or a group of people aim to threaten, tease or embarrass someone else by using a mobile phone, the internet or other technologies including social media. Escaping cyber bullying can be very difficult because anyone can get access to a mobile phone or the internet almost anywhere, it can be tough for those on the receiving end to avoid it, even in the safety of their own home. It is important to note at this point that pupils are not permitted to bring mobile phones into school. In all of these forms of bullying, there may well be elements which are; homophobic, racist and/or sexual.

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH: DEALING WITH BULLYING

In creating an environment which first minimises the incidence of bullying and then deals effectively with instances when they arise the school's anti-bullying stance is made tangible through:

1. School Environment

Research indicates that a significant amount of bullying in schools takes place in school yards and playgrounds. At Llangatwg Community School, bullying behaviour is minimised by the following approaches:-

(a) Since an element of bullying consists of older, bigger pupils using their greater size and strength in such a way that younger pupils are intimidated, Year 7 pupils access their lunch via the Youth wing. This is an effective strategy to allow the youngest pupils in the school to access their queues and food areas away from the often bigger pupils.

(b) A staff presence in both the school interior and exterior during non-teaching time is seen as important. There is a carefully constructed plan for ensuring that there is a rota of staff who perform supervisory duties in designated areas at break and lunchtimes.

(c) The rule that all pupils remain on site reduces the risk of bullying. The policy ensures that pupils are never far from a supervised area. The wide variety of lunchtime activities on offer and the availability of a supervised library and Pupil Support Centre area also affords pupils the opportunity not only to participate in the life of the school but to be in contact with caring adults.

(d) The presence of Year 10 Peer Mentors and Year 11 Prefects, who are on duty at lunch time, breaktime and lesson change over. They are available for younger pupils, who may be experiencing problems, to approach. Year 10 Peer Mentors in particular have been trained in strategies for dealing with the issue of bullying and how to spot the tell-tale signs.

2. The Curriculum

The pastoral programme plays an important role not only in explicitly focusing on the problem of bullying but also implicitly through building skills and attitudes which encourage positive behaviour and develop regard for the personal integrity of individuals.

The pastoral curriculum is reviewed annually and updated to fit the needs of its pupils. Cyberbullying materials have been implemented and all pupils are spoken to by our community Police Officer. Other areas covered include promoting anti-bullying month, black History month, Internet Safety and LGBT awareness events.

In addition, where appropriate, use is made of the general curriculum to address bullying issues, such as in Religious Studies, English, History, Art and ICT.

3. School Ethos

Key in establishing an environment which minimises bullying is the work that the school does in ensuring a calm, orderly atmosphere in which a high premium is set on the quality of relationships that exist amongst those who work here.

Llangawtg Community School works hard to ensure that such an atmosphere exists through a multifaceted approach. Important strands in this approach include:

- (a) Our Discipline For Learning Policy, which encourages and acknowledges appropriate behaviour as well as endeavour and success.
- (b) Excellent working relationships between staff and pupils built on a substantial commitment towards pupil progress and success.
- (c) Proactivity through the pastoral, curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school which is intent on establishing a culture where pupils feel they are major stakeholders in the organisation and community: for example; School Council, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Charity events.

4. Articulating the School's 'Anti-Bullying' Stance

The school commits itself to making its policy on bullying known to:

- (i) Members of the Governing Body
- (ii) Staff - teaching and non-teaching
- (iii) Pupils

(iv) Parents/carers

(i) The Governing Body will be involved in the construction and adoption of the school's anti bullying policy and members of the Governing Body will, from time to time, be involved in its implementation.

(ii) Each member of staff will be familiarised with the school's policy on bullying and given regular reminders of their roles in addressing the issue. All newly qualified teachers receive training on this issue from the Deputy Headteacher.

(iii) Prior to entering the school, staff liaising with both partner primaries and preferred placement primaries take care to clearly articulate the school's stance on the issue of bullying. On many occasions, current Llangatwg pupils accompany the staff on these transition visits to speak to the Year 6 children who are about to join us. By using this form of peer education, we are able to put these young minds at rest.

Furthermore, our Year 9 pupils annually participate in a county led Peer Education Initiative called 'Crucial Crew'. By means of this platform, Llangatwg pupils are able to impart the Anti Bullying message to our Year 6 pupils, by means of a quiz, role play exercise, self-made video and leaflet.

Induction Day can be a daunting prospect for our Year 6 pupils, so we are careful to link Year 10 Peer Mentors with each group or class, ensuring that they are fully utilised as a preventative measure for any foreseeable problems.

Upon arrival at Llangatwg the issue is once again tackled through a module in the Year 7 Pastoral Programme and frequently addressed in assemblies.

Bullying, where it exists, often persists due to a reluctance on the part of victims and others to communicate the problem to those who are in a position to help solve the problem. Much is done through the efforts of all who work at Llangatwg to create the kind of atmosphere where pupils have confidence in the adults and older pupils they work alongside. There is a high priority placed on creating the kind of ethos and environment where not only is it 'O.K. to tell' but where also pupils will be confident that their concerns will receive a sympathetic response.

All Llangatwg Community School pupils are provided with a Personal Planner each year, which includes a page of information with regard to bullying / being bullied. Both pupils and parents can refer to this support and guidance on offer.

Every year the school participates in a national 'Anti Bullying Week', which refreshes pupil understanding of our 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. During this week, we revisit

the issue by means of assemblies, questionnaires, DVDs, drama productions, songs, poems, 'anti bullying' wrist bands, cyber bullying lessons, posters and banners.

(iv) Parents are informed of our stance on bullying through the medium of the new intake Parents' Evening, the Personal Planner Information Page, the Anti-Bullying leaflet issued to their child during the Crucial Crew Initiative and through this policy.

DEALING WITH BULLYING - WHEN AND WHERE IT OCCURS

The policy thus far focuses on the kind of measures which are intended to stop bullying occurring. Inevitably there will be occasions when, despite our best efforts, bullying will occur.

Often bullying situations are complex and do not lend themselves readily to a strictly formulaic approach to the problem. Key staff dealing with bullying situations are more often than not, Year Leaders, Key stage Leaders and/or members of the School Leadership Team.

These members of staff all place a high priority on the following:

- a) Involving Parents.
- b) Supporting pupils – both the Victims and the Perpetrator.
- c) Recording all incidents effectively & revisiting the issue on several occasions to ensure no reoccurrence.

Involving Parents

Often schools are made aware of bullying through notification from the parents of the victim. This is to be encouraged and commended. Schools can deal with instances of bullying only if they are aware they are taking place. In talking to parents care should be taken to ensure:-

- They feel their concerns are being taken seriously;
- That the school is intent on taking appropriate action to bring about improvement.

Please Note: the school also places a high premium also on the early involvement of the parents of those pupils who are identified as bullies. Their support in bringing about change is vital.

Supporting pupils - both the Victims and the Perpetrator

Staff dealing with bullying instances tend to be the Year Leaders and/or Key Stage Leaders. These dedicated and experienced staff members will assist victims to develop strategies to become more resistant towards bullying behaviour. This may include:

- Boosting self-esteem and developing assertiveness;
- Making referrals to the Year 10 Peer Mentoring Scheme;
- Enlisting the help and support of other pupils e.g. Year 11 Prefects;

- Offering advice on where and how pupils spend their non-teaching time in school; involving their parents in the process.
- In dealing with those who are identified as perpetrators, strategies include:
- Confronting the bully with the consequences of his/her actions;
- Reminding him/her of the school's and society's expectations and reinforcing the school's stance with punitive measure which may include detentions, isolation or a fixed term exclusion from school—depending on the seriousness of the situation, involving their parents in the process.

Of critical importance here is the sense of absolute commitment which the school conveys to both victim and perpetrator that bullying will not be tolerated.

RECORDING ALL INCIDENTS EFFECTIVELY & REVISITING THE ISSUE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS

The effective team work and excellent communication skills that exist between the pastoral staff continues to be a particular strength of the school. Year Leaders, especially, make every effort to deal with reported instances of bullying and, where bullying exists across more than one year group, it is usual to adopt a 'team teach' approach.

All instances of bullying are recorded on a 'Sims'. Details of the complaint and actions taken are recorded and kept, as evidence, in the victim's school file.

If the problem persists, staff will refer the issue on to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, for their attention. Consequences for the culprit at this stage could include internal exclusion, Meetings with Parents and/or a Fixed Term Exclusion.

The majority of our pupils are conveyed to and from school by bus and/or taxis. These buses and taxis are unsupervised in the sense that they have a driver but not always an escort.

THE JOURNEY TO AND FROM SCHOOL

The school acknowledges the potential for bullying to occur in an environment where adult supervision is light.

Our response is:

To articulate very clearly to bus / taxi companies the school's position on bullying; liaise closely with these companies, when the issue of bullying occurs;

To participate fully in all initiatives provided by the LA's Road Safety Team; Year 7 have a dedicated lesson on bus safety.

To encourage older pupils (especially Peer Mentors and Prefects), to act as our 'eyes and ears' on the buses and report any difficulties when they arise.

To be resolute in our response to those identified as involved in bullying behaviour, removing the right to travel from extreme or persistent offenders.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BULLYING

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults, whether it be parents or members of staff, should be aware of these possible signs and they should aim to investigate further if a child:

- Is frightened of walking to and from school;
- Doesn't want to go on the school / public bus;
- Begs to be driven to school;
- Changes his / her usual routine;
- Is unwilling to go to school;
- Begins truanting;
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence;
- Starts stammering;
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away;
- Has trouble sleeping e.g. has nightmares;
- Feels ill in the mornings;
- Begins to do poorly in school work;
- Comes home with torn or damaged books;
- Has possessions that "go missing";
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully);
- Has dinner money or other monies continually "lost";
- Has unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen);
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- Is bullying other children or siblings;
- Stops eating;
- Is frightened to say what's wrong;
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

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

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

Article 2 (non-discrimination)

The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Article 6 (life, survival and development)

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 13 (freedom of expression)

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion)

Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.

Article 28 (right to education)

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29 (goals of education)

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

