

Bullying Policy

Tolerance of others is central to the Fahan philosophy. The school expects and affirms each girl's ability, worth and independence of thought. Fahan believes students work more effectively in an environment free from exclusion, prejudice, humiliation, oppression, abuse or harassment.

Intolerance of others is unacceptable to the Fahan ethos as it affects everyone, not just perpetrators and their victims. It is the responsibility of students and parents to advise staff members of any incidents of intolerance. Our aim is to have a safe, secure and harmonious environment for us all. Every student has the right to enjoy her time at school.

Aims:

- a) To teach, protect and support students through :
 - the establishment of an environment where the uniqueness of each child is appreciated
 - strong staff leadership in terms of tolerance and acceptance of their responsibilities under "duty of care"
 - a clear statement of behaviour guidelines
- b) To increase school community awareness by communicating :
 - an understanding of what bullying is
 - an attitude that bullying is unacceptable
 - there are strategies in place to deal with bullying
- c) To focus upon :
 - detection and prevention strategies
 - response guidelines where instances occur
- d) To provide a supportive environment encouraging responsibility in students to disclose details when bullying occurs

Definition of Bullying

This is behaviour that is intended to hurt, injure, threaten or frighten another person in a way where the victim feels powerless to do anything about it.

Bullying is a conscious desire to hurt another person and to put her or him under stress. Generally speaking, bullying is a **repetitive** action that is characterised by misuse of power. Bullying draws attention to differences in appearance, ability, race, gender and religion in a negative way. Passive support of this behaviour is a form of bullying.

Bullying can take many forms:

| | |
|---|---|
| Exclusion | includes malicious gossip, rumours and not allowing people to join a group. |
| Verbal | includes name calling, offensive language, putting people down, picking on people because of their race, gender or religion, sexually oriented jokes, using rude names or commenting about another's morals, and asking questions about a person's private life with intent to embarrass or hurt them. |
| Covert | is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Covert bullying includes lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance. |
| Gesture | includes facial expressions and body language which are 'put downs' |
| Visual | includes offensive notes, graffiti, drawings, or writing about another's body. |
| Victimisation | includes stand-over tactics, picking on others, threats to 'get' people, extortion, damaging or stealing other people's property and unwanted invitations of a sexual nature. |
| Physical | includes fighting, pushing, shoving, invasion of personal space and touching or brushing against someone in a sexual manner. |
| Racial Discrimination of any kind is a form of Bullying. | |

Each person has the right and the responsibility to report bullying to a member of staff.

Indicators that bullying is occurring - these may be obvious or hidden but some indicators are:

- reluctance to attend/leave school
- regularity of being alone, working in library during breaks
- concentration problems
- complaining of stomach aches/headaches
- bed wetting, loss of appetite
- unexplained bruises, torn clothing
- mood swings
- aggressive behaviour at home with parents/siblings
- withdrawal from social/co-curricular activities

Longer term effects on bully and the person being bullied:

- loss of confidence, insecurity, sometimes resorts to bullying others
- loss of popularity, home problems

Prevention Strategies:

1. *School/student commitment to respect others*
2. *Increase awareness of the school's bullying policy*
 - circularised annually
 - regular reminders that bullying is unacceptable and what to do if it occurs
3. *Creation of a supportive and positive climate*
 - promotion of individual differences
 - promotion of mutual responsibility for the welfare of community members
 - emphasis on the positive options of revealing incidents

4. *School practices based on*

- mutual self respect
- compassionate behaviour
- clarity of expectations parental contact

5. *Supervision practices*

- responsibility for monitoring school situations
- modelling appropriate behaviour – tolerance, use of conflict resolution strategies
- assertive or aggressive behaviour

6. *Review structures and systems*

7. *Pastoral Care Groups*

- generate awareness and build involvement by students
- encourage discussion and student views
- promote collective responsibility and the encouragement of being active observers
- create a positive climate and build self esteem
- establish clear guidelines for behaviour based on respect
- cater for individual differences
- assist students with goal setting
- encourage students to take up challenges
- promote anger management, conflict resolution skills and leadership skills
- be understanding and approachable
- be alert and visible in the school
- explanation of individual rights and affirmation of self worth
- intervention where necessary

What Parents Can Do

Take time to communicate with your daughter. Encourage alternative responses.

Watch for signs of distress and possible sources of anxiety. Encourage your child to speak up.

- be careful and realistic about taking the attitude of, “..not my daughter, she wouldn’t...”
- if your daughter appears unhappy or unsettled with her life at school, talk to her. Do not interrogate her.
- Talk to the class teacher/tutor
- Be careful of the anecdotal and emotional reporting of incidents
- Monitor telephone calls from school acquaintances
- Be prepared to discuss issues openly, honestly and objectively

The Bullied

The aim of the bullying policy is to restore self-esteem and support. Students need to understand that there are alternatives available to them in dealing with bullying.

- If the incident is not hurtful or singular in nature then it is probably best to ignore it. If it involves physical assault or frequency – action should be taken to stop it.
- The student should inform her class teacher, tutor or a trusted member of staff. She should feel confident and unafraid in doing so.
- The student should be assertive, not aggressive, indicating to the bully that the behaviour has to stop otherwise it will be reported.
- There needs to be an understanding that something will be done and feeling of assurance that investigation will occur and action will happen.

- Counselling from an appropriate member of staff will be provided.
- Adjustment to timetable or classes may occur.
- Follow up with the victim will occur as appropriate to the level of bullying that was directed at her.
- Parents will be informed.

The Bully

The aim is to have the student involved understand that bullying is unacceptable and that her behaviour needs to change. Steps may be –

- let the bully/bullies know that we know and that the victim will also be spoken to
- remind the bully that there is a school policy and that she is in the minority
- explain the feeling the victim might have
- encourage ways that the victim might be assisted to feel safer and happier
- let it be known that follow up will occur
- let it be known that parents of all parties will be informed

Follow up

Encouragement of positive actions at follow up meetings.

An apology from the bully should be encouraged.

In cases of severe bullying or recurring incidents it must be made clear that such actions are contrary to community acceptance and standards and that sanctions may include removal from the community either temporarily or permanently.