

# Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy is based on the DECD guidelines and aims to produce a safe and caring environment in which all pupils can develop to their full potential.

All students at Ashford Special School have an intellectual disability. Some students also have additional impairments such as vision impairment, hearing impairment, autism and high support needs. Currently the school has a very high proportion of students with autism.

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. Every effort will be made to educate our cohort of pupils as to the rights and responsibilities of all members of our community to feel safe and respected at all times. We recognize that understanding the concept of bullying may be difficult for some of our pupils. The school community is however committed to ensuring that all members of the school community - pupils, staff, and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organisation within the school for preventing and responding to bullying.

## **Definition of Bullying**

At Ashford Special School bullying may be defined as repeated acts of aggression aimed at gaining a specific and intentional negative outcome for the victim.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, isolation, name calling, writing notes, emailing or texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour it is usually deliberately hurtful. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour, which while never condoned may arise as a result of the student's disability. When the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

## **School Council**

The School Council and leadership team are responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. They are committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy and ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

## **School Staff**

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Pupil's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others to foster empathy. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying, and will investigate all such reports.

Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and use behaviour management strategies with a focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding appropriate solutions to problems. The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all students against bullying behaviour

## **Students**

Students are expected to develop tolerance and to demonstrate mutual respect for each other. They should report incidents of bullying to their teachers and support staff.

## **Parents**

- Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
- Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
- Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
- Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.
- Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

## **Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying Incidents**

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and/or the leadership team for investigation. This reporting may be done by the student, parent, other students or another staff member. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the principal..

## **Responding to Bullying**

Support will be provided for anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or another staff member, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it. Staff will act as advocates for the students. Victims will be assured that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.

The school will inform parents/guardians of the measures being taken to address the issue.

Help and support will be sought for a bully. The school recognizes that our cohort of students may not always be aware that behaviour they are engaging in can be classified as bullying. Every effort is made to help them understand their behaviour and to see things from another's point of view. This will include speaking with them to discover why they became involved, informing their parents/guardians and continuing to work with them in order to modify their behaviour. Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break for short periods or be subject to special monitoring procedures.

Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school. Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

In dealing with bullying issues among staff the school adheres to procedures set out in the Induction Folder including the Staff Relationship Guidelines and grievance procedures.