

Parish of Ballynure & Ballyeaston (Ballyclare)



Anti-bullying Policy for children (v1.0 Final)

(Note: For cases of bullying between adults the 'Dignity in Church Life Policy' should be adhered to)

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states :

All children have the right to:

- Have their welfare considered paramount in all decisions taken about them (Article 3).
- Be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12).
- Be protected from being hurt or badly treated (Article 19).
- Be kept safe from things that could harm their development - (Article 36).
- Have the right to help if they have been hurt, neglected or badly treated (Article 39).

Our parish is committed to providing a caring, supportive and friendly environment where children learn to value and respect each other and are challenged to reach their full potential through active participation. Therefore we will not tolerate bullying by anyone in any of our activities. We are committed to :

- Providing a welcoming, loving and supportive environment to all.
- Ensuring that the highest standards of Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Child Protection are in place.
- Promoting and sustaining good behaviour.
- Treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Definitions

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression –whether it is verbal, psychological or physical –that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation, exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of identity abuse based on gender and sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other devices.

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that our parish will consider as bullying. When assessing a one-off incident, to decide on whether to classify it as bullying, the Parish Panel will consider the following criteria:

- Severity and significance of the incident.
- Evidence of pre-meditation.
- Impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional).
- Impact of the incidents on the wider youth/children's organisation.
- Previous relationships between those involved.
- Any previous incidents involving the individuals.

Two specific definitions are required which are used regularly in this policy :

P.E.B.B. Person experiencing bullying behaviour

P.D.B.B. Person displaying bullying behaviour

Signs and symptoms of bullying

Signs or symptoms of a child being bullied may not always be obvious or may go unnoticed. We also need to be aware that some children are reluctant to report bullying, it is very often a parent or an observant

leader who picks up the signs of emotional distress on the part of the child which eventually leads to bullying being identified as the cause of the distress. For example the child may appear withdrawn, not taking part in group activities, or they may cling to a leader. These will not necessarily mean they are being bullied, but it is important that leaders are aware of any signs of anxiety, but bear in mind that they may attribute to other factors and may not be bullying.

Responsibility

Everyone has a responsibility for creating a safe and supportive environment for all members of our youth & children's organisations.

Everyone in the youth & children's organisations, including children, their parents/carers and the leaders are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- Foster positive self-esteem.
- Behave towards others in a mutually respectful way.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
- Inform leaders or members of the Parish Panel of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour.
- Children to refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity
- Children to refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour.
- Intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a leader.
- Emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult (parent/carer, leader, parish panel) about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed.
- Explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- Listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken.
- Resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.

What can staff/volunteers do if a child tells them they are being bullied?

- Listen calmly and accept what is said.
- Complete an incident form following the conversation and keep on file as this forms the basis of the bullying report. Notes should include nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and child's response. This report should be given to the Parish Panel.
- Reassure them that help is available, action will be taken, the child was right to tell, it is not their fault and it could happen to anyone.
- Negotiate confidentiality – be clear you'll only tell people who need to know.
- Ensure the child's safety. The staff/volunteers should be aware that the safety of the child is paramount, and this can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents/guardians in relation to a solution and possible actions.
- Tell the child that you will keep them informed and how you intend to proceed.
- Respond to the incident – all actions should be guided by the needs of the child. Decide what action to take and by whom.

Responding to incidents of bullying

There are a number of approaches which can be used, and the staff/volunteers should determine which action to take depending on the incident of bullying.

1. The Code of Behaviour sets out the guidelines for children regarding boundaries and appropriate behaviour. Draw everyone's attention back to the Code of Behaviour and the consequences of not abiding by the Code.

2. Focus on the feelings of both the P.E.B.B. and the P.D.B.B., and what they can do to make the situation better. Some children who are perceived to be engaged in bullying behaviour may have low self-esteem or may not understand the 'rules' of social interactions which may manifest itself in aggressive behaviour. Children who exhibit bullying behaviour need to be helped to learn and understand more socially acceptable forms of behaviour. They also need to acknowledge their actions have been wrong and understand that there are consequences for their actions.
3. Facilitate and support both parties to have time and space to consider their feelings and to think about what has taken place, including the next steps to resolve the bullying.
4. Consequences – In order that the P.D.B.B. understands fully the effects of bullying, and to provide opportunities for taking personal responsibility, there may in some cases need to be consequences for the actions taken. This may include a withdrawal of privileges, but this must be done in a fair and appropriate manner in which the child feels able to demonstrate positive changes for the future, rather than to feel continually labelled. This must be done with sensitivity and love by the leader.
5. Parental/Guardian involvement – make parents/guardians of all children involved aware of the incident of bullying and where necessary ask them to intervene in the situation.
6. Where all other interventions have not worked, suspension or expulsion of the P.D.B.B. may be used as a last resort in bullying.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is defined as “any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others”.

Cyberbullying, similar to more traditional forms of bullying, must meet three main criteria:

- Intention to cause harm to the P.E.B.B.
- Repetition of abusive behaviour(s) over time (however in some instances, one behavioural act can create an on-going sense of intimidation for the P.E.B.B. (e.g. posting a humiliating photo/video which can be viewed by a large audience can have long-term effects)).
- Imbalance of power between P.E.B.B. and P.D.B.B. (i.e. technological skills, anonymity).

Cyberbullying differs from more traditional forms of bullying in a number of ways:

- The audience is larger;
- There are no time or location barriers;
- It can happen 24/7
- The P.E.B.B.'s reaction is not often seen, leading to a reduction in feelings of empathy or guilt for the P.D.B.B.

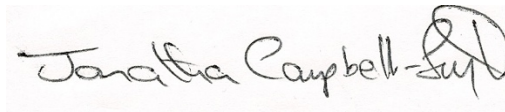
Actions staff and volunteers should consider when a child is the target of cyberbullying:

- Confirm that you are dealing with bullying behaviour.
- Listen calmly and uncritically to the report the child is making.
- Remind the child that it is not their fault.
- Tell the child not to respond to the bully as this can exacerbate the issue.
- Ask the child if they have talked to their parents about the cyberbullying. If they have not, the staff member/volunteer should offer to help the child to talk to their parents about the problem.
- The following advice should be given by the staff member/volunteer to the parents of the child experiencing the cyberbullying:
 - Keep a copy of all correspondence between the P.E.B.B. and the P.D.B.B.
 - Encourage the child to remove the P.D.B.B. as a 'friend' online and block them from his/her phone.

- Report the issue to the website and/or mobile phone company as appropriate.
- Serious issues should be reported to PSNI – legal issues include making inappropriate sexual suggestions, racist remarks or persistent bullying that is seriously damaging to the child’s wellbeing. In such situations the staff member/volunteer should report their concerns to the panel who can assist them to inform parents that they should report the cyber bullying or ‘sexting’ to the PSNI by bringing the child’s phone to the local PSNI station and making a report.

Adopted by the Select Vestry on 13th September 2023

Signed (Chair of vestry)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janeta Campbell-Smyth". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the text "Signed (Chair of vestry)".

(Hon Secretary)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lorraine Ogilby". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the text "(Hon Secretary)".