



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

Anti-Bullying Policy (Students)

(this Policy also forms part of the H&S Policy as well as being a stand-alone Policy).

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Abacas Special School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy

The Board of Management, in acknowledging the learning difficulties of the students here in Abacas Special School, recognise that any perceived bullying by students will be dealt with in the knowledge and understanding that every student in the school has a diagnosis of Autism. The Board also recognises that individuals with Autism do not typically exhibit behaviours of concern for the same, more complex and psychological/internal reasons as typical peers. These include malice, hatred, humiliation, social status issues, etc.

In adopting this policy the Board of management recognises that, in all probability, any bullying that will ever take place among our students will be a non-deliberate consequence of the complexities that sometimes go with having Autism and complex needs.

This Policy, while standing alone, can be viewed as part of the school's Health and Safety Policy.

Our school community believes that each student has a right to an education free from fear, annoyance and intimidation. Bullying is not tolerated.

Anti-Bullying Charter:

- We want Abacas Special School to be free from bullying
- There should be no name calling
- There should be no physical abuse
- There should be no 'ganging up on' or 'isolating of' fellow students
- Everyone should be treated with respect
- We all share the responsibility that each student's property is respected
- Anti-social behaviour is not acceptable or condoned
- Problems should be shared
- We all share responsibility to ensure that bullying is not tolerated.



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The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership
- A school-wide approach
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupil
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Bullying will not be tolerated in Abacas Special School. It is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Every student has the right to enjoy learning and leisure free from intimidation.

Students should support each other by reporting all instances of bullying with appropriate support from staff.

Bullying is too important not to report.



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Reports of bullying will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

It can take several forms:

- **verbal** as in name calling, personal comments, racial abuse
- **social** as in not being spoken to or being left out of activities
- **material** as when possessions are stolen or damaged or extortion takes place
- **mental** as when pressure to conform is applied
- **physical** as in physical assault.

Bullying is not the same thing as a disagreement between two people.

Bullying is:

- systematic and ongoing rather than once off
- distressing and hurtful to the victim as opposed to good natured fun
- always one way rather than an exchange.

Response to bullying:

All staff will try to ensure that it is not tolerated in school. Staff will respond to bullying in the first instance by:

- listening to the victim
- reassuring the victim
- continuing to offer help, advice and support to the victim



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In responding to incidents of bullying the Principal/Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal/class teacher will establish:

- the veracity
- the intent
- the seriousness
- the effect on the bullied student

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are):

- Green Room: *Alba Costa Morales*
- Purple Room: *Sarah Carroll*
- Red Room: *Aoife Ní Dheá*
- Blue Room: *James Russell*
- Yellow Room: *Gillian Clarke*
- School Principal: *Lesley Brant*

All bullying reported will be investigated by the “relevant teacher” and the principal. When bullying is detected by or reported to staff they will respond by:

- taking action as quickly as possible
- considering whether action should be public or private
- making it clear to the person involved in bullying or threatening behaviour, and/or their parents/guardians as appropriate, that such behaviour is not acceptable
- establishing whether or not the incident is part of a pattern
- encouraging the person responsible for the bullying or threatening behaviour to see the victims point of view
- explaining why a punishment (if any) is given
- sharing information with (relevant staff) other members of staff

Staff members at Abacas will treat this type of behaviour like any other behaviour of concern. Both parties have autism and will need the understanding and support of the school staff.



The behaviour analyst will conduct a functional analysis on the behaviour to determine the function and a behavioural intervention will be implemented to decrease this behaviour.

Various teaching interventions, for example social stories, will also be put in place to replace the bullying behaviour with a functionally equivalent behaviour.

If, after a period of no longer than three months, the issue still has not been resolved, the practicality of a permanent class change will be considered by the Board of Management.

In cases of bullying, parents may be invited to meet the principal/ deputy principal and the student may be suspended. If the bullying re-occurs, the case may be referred to the Board of Management.

Parents and pupils in question are required to co-operate with any investigation carried out by the principal or the Board of Management.

When analysing reported incidents the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions as *What, Where, When, Who and Why*.

In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 working school days after he/she has determined that the bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template. See Appendix 3 of the Department's Anti-Bullying Procedures (2013). In determining whether the case has been adequately or appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account.

- Has the bullying Behaviour ceased?
- Have any issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable?
- Have the relationships between the parties been restored as far as is practicable?
- Has any feedback been received from the parties involved, their parents or the principal/deputy principal?



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Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred to the complaints procedure which involves writing a formal letter to the Board of Management.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Students involved in bullying or threatening behaviour, either as a victim or as the person responsible for the bullying or threatening behaviour will be supported in order to overcome the impact of such behaviour. The student who is suffering (at times silently) will need constant reassurance.

It is made clear to all students/staff that when they report incidents of bullying, they are behaving responsibly.

Signed: Finola O'Rourke (Chairperson)

Date: 20/12/2022