

# **Anti-Bullying**

## **Policy and Procedures**

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## **1.0 Anti-bullying Policy Statement**

All children/young people and adults who participate in activities run under the auspices of the Diocese of Killaloe will be treated with dignity and respect by the adult leaders/volunteers in charge and by the other young people involved. They are entitled to be safe and happy and be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect. Bullying will not be accepted and everybody has a responsibility to report any incidents of bullying to the leader in charge. Bullying is repeated physical, verbal or psychological aggression directed by an individual or group against others. Bullying can occur at any age, in any environment, and can be long or short-term. Bullying has detrimental effects, the most serious of which are fear, anxiety, loss of confidence, and also hinders the enjoyment and benefits of participation. Activity leaders will be made aware of the main types of bullying, the signs of bullying and ways of preventing it. They will also be aware that bullying can be subtle and hard to observe or detect. Any child/young person can be a victim of, and/or a perpetrator of bullying. If a leader/volunteer witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place, he/she will follow the procedure outlined below.

## **2.0 Purpose of Policy**

- To make leaders/volunteers aware of the types and signs of bullying and the detrimental effects of bullying can have on children/young people.
- To ensure leaders/volunteers endeavour to create an atmosphere in which bullying is not acceptable.
- To outline a procedure for handling of bullying complaints and imposition of relevant sanctions.

## **3.0 Principles**

The following principles underline this policy;

- Emphasise that children/young people should always demonstrate politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property as fundamental principle of behaviour.
- Raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behavior.
- Encourage children/young people to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Outline procedures for reporting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Support for those affected by bullying behaviour.
- Help the alleged perpetrator(s) involved in the bullying behaviour to understand the consequences of their actions and to modify their behaviour accordingly.
- Emphasise the role of parents and other state agencies in implementing this anti-bullying policy.

## 4.0 *Scope of Policy*

This policy is addressed to all *Church Personnel/Volunteers* in the Diocese of Killaloe who are likely to have access to children/vulnerable adults or hold *Positions of Trust* within the Diocese.

## 5.0 *Types of Bullying*

- *Emotional:* Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures).
- *Physical:* Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, “messaging” or any use of violence.
- *Racist:* Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- *Sexual:* Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- *Homophobic:* Because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality.
- *Verbal:* Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing and slugging.
- *Cyber:* All areas of Internet, such as email and web, chat room misuse, threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

## 6.0 *Signs of Bullying*

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. The following are warning signs and cause of concern for adults/leaders that a child/young person may be getting bullied:

- Does not want to attend youth group/school/club anymore.
- Has physical signs such as unexplained repeated bruises or scratches.
- Has poor or deteriorating schoolwork, inability to concentrate.
- Has a possession which is damaged or “gone missing”.
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully).
- Continually “losing” money/belongings or having damaged belongings.
- Changes their usual routine.
- Is reluctant to go out and has few friends.
- Has torn clothes, broken glasses, missing schoolbooks.
- Becomes withdrawn, depressed, anxious, or lacking in confidence.
- Starts stammering or regresses in some way such as bed-wetting.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is bullying other children or siblings.
- Stops eating.
- Is frightened to say what's wrong.
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone.
- Is nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received.
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares.
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

This list is not exhaustive and there are many other possible reasons for the above.

## **7.0 Prevention**

Leaders /volunteers will make it clear that bullying is unacceptable and will be treated seriously. They will be aware of the possibility of bullying in the course of supervision and welcome information and respect confidentiality. All involved in an activity share the responsibility for making the place/activity safe and happy.

The following methods may help children to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- Include young people in discussions about what bullying is, its consequences and why it cannot be tolerated.
- Encourage young people to take responsibility and report any incidents of bullying to the leader.
- Review this Anti-Bullying Policy with children/young people involved in parochial/diocesan activities.
- Drawing up a group contract/code of behaviour for young people.
- Signing a Code of Behaviour/Contract.
- Adequate supervision and monitoring of activities.

## **8.0 Procedures**

- All incidents of bullying should be brought to the attention of the leader/volunteer in charge of group.
- All incidents will be recorded on incident report forms and kept on file.
- Parents will be informed of any incidents of bullying and should meet with leader/volunteer in charge to discuss the problem.
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
- This usually involves first talking to the victim, and finding out about the nature of the bullying, the name of the alleged perpetrator(s), and how the victim felt.
- Talk to the alleged perpetrator(s) and also to bystanders and those who may have had a part in the incident, either by initiation or joining in.
- Following final investigations and considerations, sanctions may be imposed. The leader(s) will meet with the parent/guardian of the two parties involved if appropriate. They will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them.
- Try to bring about reconciliation and some 'circle time' for the group exploring feelings may help find solutions.
- Both the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) should be supported and helped throughout the process.
- If both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate a meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved.
- If necessary and appropriate, the Gardaí/HSE may be consulted.

## 9.0 Outcomes

When the inquiry into the alleged bullying incident has taken place and it has been concluded that bullying has occurred, it will be necessary to take some action against the perpetrator of the bullying. The action should be agreed between at least two leaders / volunteers and should be appropriate to the seriousness of the incident(s). If the perpetrator of the bullying is a child/young person, the parent/guardian of the child/young person and the child/young person will be informed of the action that will be taken. If the perpetrator of the bullying is an adult, the following people will be informed of the action that will be taken:

- Parish Priest/Parish Safeguarding Representative.
- The Respondent

If possible the perpetrator(s) may be asked to genuinely apologise and be reconciled. Other sanctions may be agreed upon, e.g. time-out of group activity etc.

For serious incidents involving children/young people, sending the child/young person home and not allowing them to participate in any further events/activities may be deemed appropriate.

For less serious incidents involving children/young people, allowing the child/young person to continue to participate in the event/activity once they have apologised to the victim and stated that they will not engage in any further bullying behaviour. Their behaviour would then be closely monitored.

Some counselling may be necessary to build up self-esteem in victim and or in the bully.