



MICKLEFIELD
SCHOOL

BULLYING POLICY

To maintain the ethos of Micklefield School where each child feels safe to learn, happy to play and to be nurtured, so that she develops her potential as well as a strong self-esteem, it is imperative that a culture of respect is instilled.

Any form of disrespectful, aggressive, unkind behaviour amongst the girls is unacceptable and is viewed in a serious light. Micklefield encourages the girls to resolve their issues in a peaceful manner and the education and practice of conflict resolution skills forms an integral part of the school curriculum.

It is important to recognise the difference between bullying and normal behaviour. Where the behaviour of a child or group of children is no longer a natural part of day-to-day issues, age-appropriate issues or squabbles, and there is a constant imbalance of power that affects the well-being of others, it can be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Aims of the Bullying Policy:

- Define bullying
- Identify bullying behaviour
- Give strategies for dealing with bullying

Defining bullying

Bullying behaviour can:

- be aggressive, negative, unkind
- intend to be hurtful
- be carried out repeatedly
- occur in relationships where there is an imbalance of power

Factors that lead to bullying:

- Low self-esteem or insecurity
- Trying to gain access to the 'in group'
- Attempting to gain social acceptance at the expense of someone else
- The need to gain power
- When bullying is excused or encouraged
- Bullies can be the victim of bullying in the home

Identifying bullying

Psychological:

- Relational aggression – the use of friendships as a weapon e.g. "If you don't do that I won't be your friend anymore"
- Social aggression – damage to a person's social status through gossip, rumours, exclusion etc.

- Indirect aggression – when the intent is allegedly not hurtful e.g. “I was just joking” “I didn’t really mean that”
- Aggressive body language – non-verbal gesturing e.g. rolling eyes, silent treatment, mean looks

Physical:

- Physical abuse – kicking, punching, biting, hitting, damage to property
- Verbal abuse – threats, name calling, humiliating, swearing, rude gestures

‘Cyber bullying’

- This is done via the internet, e-mail, cell phones etc. and can be direct or anonymous

Strategies for dealing with bullying

The responsibility of learners:

- Speak about the problem immediately with someone else e.g. mediator, teacher, principal, parent.
- Question what role she played in the situation before accusing.
- Be willing to solve the problem in a constructive, peaceful manner. Do not retaliate with the same kind of behaviour or with aggression.
- Be assertive with the person – tell them to stop and say how you feel.
- If girls are aware of bullying taking place, report it to the school without hesitation – do not be quiet.
- When reporting incidents, do so accurately.
- Do not gossip, spread stories or embellish the situation.

The responsibility of parents if their daughter is being bullied:

- Listen, ask questions and empathise.
- Try not to judge her decisions. Avoid telling her what to do, rather brainstorm possible solutions and outcomes.
- Do not dismiss the problem.
- Discuss the issue with the teacher or the principal. The school is unable to take any further action if it is unaware of the situation.
- Do not take matters into your own hands. The situation must be dealt with through the school.
- Set the example to your children and handle the situation constructively, peaceably and with respect for others.
- Avoid gossip – this aggravates the situation.

The responsibility of parents if their child bullies:

- Stop the behaviour immediately and make it known that the behaviour is unacceptable.
- Talk to the child and find out why she acted in this manner. Listen.
- Avoid taking sides.
- Discuss possible solutions and consequences.
- Communicate expectations and positive behaviour for the future as well as consequences for bullying.
- Praise improvement in behaviour.

- Try to unpack the underlying reasons for bullying behaviour. Seek professional help if necessary.
- Keep the lines of communication open with the school so that you can be supported to deal with the problem.

The responsibility of the school:

- Stop the behaviour immediately and make it known that the behaviour is unacceptable.
- Implement appropriate consequences
- Continually monitor the interaction between the girls so that bullying is discouraged in all situations.
- Provide clear outlines to parents and learners on bullying behaviour for each phase.
- Provide ongoing programmes to reassert values as well as the life skills to deal with conflict resolution and bullying behaviour.
- Deal appropriately and constructively with all reported cases of bullying and treat all parties with respect.
- In consultation with the parents, provide the appropriate consequences for the perpetrator of bullying e.g. letter of apology, de-merit, verbal or written warning, 'on report' mediation, counselling.
- In consultation with the parents, provide the appropriate counselling for the perpetrator of bullying.

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