

# Bullying Policy

## De Blijberg International Department

### Mission Statement

De Blijberg International school is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive and safe environment that is free of discrimination and bullying. Our school works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Each student in our school has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

### **Bullying Definition**



Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An imbalance of power: children who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

## Signs a child is being bullied

Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs. Some signs that *may* point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewellery
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Children may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Lack of progress, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem

## Signs a child is bullying others

**Children may be bullying others if they:**

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are overly competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

## Why don't children ask for help?

Statistics show that an adult was notified in less than half (40%) of bullying incidents.

Children **do not** tell adults for many reasons:

- Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Children may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tell-tale.
- Children may fear backlash from the child who bullied them.
- Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Children may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Children who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no-one cares or could understand.
- Children may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect children from bullying and children can fear losing this support.

## Types of Bullying

There are four types of bullying:

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
  - Teasing
  - Name-calling
  - Inappropriate comments
  - Threatening to cause harm
- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  - Leaving someone out on purpose
  - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
  - Spreading rumours about someone
  - Embarrassing someone in public
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  - Hitting/kicking/pinching
  - Spitting
  - Tripping/pushing
  - Taking or breaking someone's things
  - Making mean or rude hand gestures
- **Cyberbullying** is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Cyberbullying includes:
  - Mean text messages or emails
  - Rumours sent by email
  - Fake profiles
  - Embarrassing pictures or videos

## Where and when bullying happens

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like the playground, the neighbourhood, or on the Internet.

## The roles children play



There are many roles that children can play. Children can bully others, they can be bullied, or they may witness bullying. When children are involved in bullying, they often play more than one role. Sometimes children may both be bullied and bully others or they may witness other

children being bullied. It is important to understand the multiple roles children play in order to effectively prevent and respond to bullying.

## Children involved in bullying

The roles children play in bullying are not limited to those who bully others and those who are bullied. Some researchers talk about the "circle of bullying" to define both those directly involved in bullying and those who actively or passively assist the behaviour or defend against it. Direct roles include:

- **Children who Bully:** These children engage in bullying behaviour towards their peers. There are many risk factors that may contribute to the child's involvement in the behaviour. Often, these students require support to change their behaviour and address any other challenges that may be influencing their behaviour.
- **Children who are Bullied:** These children are the targets of bullying behaviour. Some factors put children at more risk of being bullied, but not all children will be bullied. Sometimes, these children may need help learning how to respond to bullying.

Even if a child is not directly involved in bullying, they may be contributing to the behaviour. Witnessing the behaviour may also affect the child, so it is important for them to learn what they should do when they see bullying happen. Roles kids play when they witness bullying include:

- **Children who assist:** These children may not start the bullying or lead in the bullying behaviour, but serve as an "assistant" to children who are bullying. These children may encourage the bullying behaviour and occasionally join in.
- **Children who reinforce:** These children are not directly involved in the bullying behaviour but they give the bullying an audience. They will often laugh or provide support for the children who are engaging in bullying. This may encourage the bullying to continue.
- **Outsiders:** These children remain separate from the bullying situation. They neither reinforce the bullying behaviour nor defend the child being bullied. Some may watch what is going on but do not provide feedback about the situation to show they are on anyone's side. Even so, providing an audience may encourage the bullying behaviour. These kids often want to help, but don't know how.
- **Children who defend:** These children actively comfort the child being bullied and may come to the child's defense when bullying occurs.

Most children play more than one role in bullying over time. In some cases, they may be directly involved in bullying as the one bullying others or being bullied and in others they may witness bullying and play an assisting or defending role. Every situation is different. Some children are both bullied and bully others. It is important to notice the multiple roles children play.

## Children at Risk of Being Bullied

Generally, children who are bullied have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what kids consider “cool”
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self-esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention

**However, even if a child has these risk factors, it does not mean that they will be bullied.**

## Children who are more likely to bully others

There are two types of children who are more likely to bully others:

- Some are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
- Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self-esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Children who have these factors are also more likely to bully others;

- Are aggressive or easily frustrated
- Have less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Think badly of others
- Have difficulty following rules
- View violence in a positive way
- Have friends who bully others

**Remember, those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, strength, cognitive ability—and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics.**

## Prevention in school



In De Blijberg International school, we know that bullying can threaten the students' physical and emotional safety at school and can negatively impact on their ability to learn. We believe that the best way to address bullying is **to stop it before it starts** and establish a climate in which bullying is not acceptable. It is important for everyone in the school community to work together to send a unified message against bullying. In De Blijberg International school, there is a school culture of acceptance, tolerance and respect. We use staff meetings, assemblies, class and parent meetings, newsletters to families, the school website, and the student handbook to establish a positive climate at school.

## Early Childhood

**Young children may be aggressive and act out when they are angry or don't get what they want, but this is not bullying.**

Early childhood often marks the first opportunity for young children to interact with each other. Between the ages of three and five, children are learning how to get along with each other, cooperate, share and understand their feelings. Young children may be aggressive and act out when they are angry or don't get what they want, **but this is not bullying.**

## Helping young children get along with others

Parents, staff and other adults who work in De Blijberg, help our children develop skills for getting along with others in age-appropriate ways.

- We model positive ways for young children to make friends. For example, practise pleasant ways that children can ask to join others in play and take turns in games. We coach the older children to help reinforce these behaviours as well. We praise children for appropriate behaviour and help young children understand what behaviours are friendly.
- We help young children learn the consequences of certain actions in terms they can understand. We encourage young children to tell an adult if they are treated in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, upset or unhappy, or if they witness other children being harmed.
- We set clear rules for behaviour and monitor children's interactions carefully. We step in quickly to stop aggressive behaviour or redirect it before it occurs.
- We use age-appropriate consequences for aggressive behaviour. We encourage the children to say "I'm sorry" whenever they hurt a peer, even accidentally. The apology is also paired with an action. For example, they have to help rebuild a knocked over block structure or replace a torn paper or crayons with new ones.

## Stop bullying on the spot!



In De Blijberg, we respond quickly and consistently to bullying behaviour and send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behaviour over time. These are some of the simple steps we take to stop bullying on the spot.

We:

- Intervene immediately
- Separate the kids involved.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Stay calm and reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
- Model respectful behaviour at all times.

## How we support children who are bullied:

- We listen and focus on the child. We ask what has been going on and show we want to help.
- We give advice about what to do. This may involve role-playing and/or thinking through how the child might react if the bullying occurs again.
- We work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child's parents will be informed.
- We ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe.
- We maintain open communication between our school and parents.
- We discuss the steps that will be taken.
- We recognize that bullying may not end overnight. We are committed to making it stop and promise to consistently support the bullied child.

## How we address bullying behaviour:

- We make sure the child knows what the problem is and that they must change their behaviour as it is wrong and harms others.
- We show the children that bullying is taken seriously by calmly telling the child that bullying will not be tolerated. We will model respectful behaviour when addressing the problem.
- We will work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied someone.

- Circle Time, drama lessons and IPC topics will be used to develop positive behaviour. The development personal skills, such as respect and empathy, are at the heart of our ethos.
- We will involve the child who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. Our goal is to help them see how their actions affect others.

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

### Why Cyberbullying is Different

Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, children who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behaviour.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and reach a child even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

### Effects of Cyberbullying



Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting children with friends and family, helping students with school and for entertainment but these tools can also be used to hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar.

## Prevent Cyberbullying



Our parents and children can prevent cyberbullying. Together, we can explore safe ways to use technology.

### **Parents, be aware of what your children are doing online.**

We encourage all parents to talk with their children about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.

#### **Parents and teachers in De Blijberg should:**

- Know the sites children visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing and who they're doing it with.
- Be clear about what sites they can visit and what they are permitted to do when they're online. Show them how to be safe online.
- Tell them not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass themselves or others. Once something is posted, it is out of their control.
- Tell them that as a responsible parent and teacher you will review their online communications on a regular basis.
- Have a sense of what the children do online and what they communicate in texts.
- Tell them to keep their passwords safe and not share them.
- Know their passwords.
- Encourage them to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied.
- Adhere to age restrictions on social media sites.

## Report Cyberbullying



When cyberbullying happens, it is important to document and report the behaviour so it can be addressed.

**Steps to take immediately:**

- Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying.
- Report cyberbullying to online service providers.
- Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service.
- Report cyberbullying to the police if there are threats of violence, sexually explicit messages or photos, stalking etc.
- Report cyberbullying immediately to the Head of school.

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