



Anti-Bullying Policy

We recognise the devastating effects and long-term damage that bullying can have on children and we hope to create safe 'bullying-free' environments for children.

What is bullying?

- Bullying is intentional, repeated and aggressive physical, verbal or psychological behaviour directed by an individual or group against another or others.
- Bullying can occur at any age, in any environment, and can be long or short term.
- Any child can be a victim of bullying.
- Bullying can be perpetrated by adults towards children, as well as children towards their peer group.
- Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which must not be condoned, may not be described as bullying. However, when the aggressive behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.
- Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.
- With developments in modern technology, children can also be victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- **Emotional/psychological:** including tormenting, excluding, extorting, intimidating, etc.
- **Physical:** including pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, intimidating, damaging/stealing property, or any use of violence, etc.
- **Racist:** including racial taunts, insults about colour, nationality, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or Traveller background, or use of graffiti or gestures.
- **Sexual:** including unwanted physical harassment or contact, or sexually abusive comments. This may constitute actual sexual abuse, which must be reported.
- **Homophobic:** including taunting a person of a different sexual orientation.
- **Verbal:** including name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, etc.
- **Cyber:** including misuse/abuse of email, mobile phones, internet chat rooms, social media, text messaging, or camera and video facilities.
- **Subtle:** such as an unwelcome expression or gesture that is repeated and focused on an individual.

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' (Tokunga, 2010, p. 278).

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

- The audience is now larger (for example, posting a humiliating photo/video can be viewed by a large audience).
- There are no time or location barriers; it can happen 24/7.
- The target's reaction is often not seen, leading to a reduction in feelings of empathy or guilt for the perpetrator.
- As identities online can be withheld and/or altered or protected, more opportunities are now available for perpetrators to be involved in this type of bullying.
- Cyberbullying has become prevalent as young people spend more time interacting and communicating online.

Prevention

To help prevent bullying, the following strategies are suggested:

- Engage children in discussions about what bullying is and why it cannot be tolerated.
- Encourage children to take responsibility and report any incidents of bullying to their leader/person in charge.
- Review this bullying guidance with children and their parents involved in Carmelite activities.
- Seek to promote positive attitudes of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all personnel.

Procedures to deal with bullying:

- All incidents of bullying should be brought to the attention of the leader/person in charge.
- Encourage children to remove the cyberbully as a 'friend' online and block them from his/her phone.
- Report issues of cyberbullying to the website and/or mobile phone company as appropriate.
- All incidents must be recorded on incident report forms and kept on file.
- Leaders should report to and seek guidance/support from the priest/Carmelite personnel in charge.
- Parents/carers and/or guardians must be informed of any incidents of bullying and should meet with the leader/person in charge to discuss the problem.
- A record should also be kept of any incident of bullying.
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated, and the bullying quickly stopped.
- All parties involved should be supported and helped throughout the process. If necessary and appropriate, the Gardaí should be consulted.