

ST. BEDE'S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

celebrates life and learning



**SAY YES TO FRIENDSHIP
SAY NO TO BULLYING**

An Information Booklet for Parents/Carers



At St. Bede's Catholic Junior School we are committed to providing a friendly, caring, safe, Christian environment for all our children so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure setting. We believe every child should be able to participate in all activities safely, enjoy a secure learning environment and achieve their full potential safe from harm.

We are committed to developing an anti-bullying culture whereby no bullying will be tolerated.

What is bullying?

Throughout school children will learn that bullying is:

- Repeated behaviour that happens regularly;
- Deliberate. The bully wants to hurt, humiliate or harm the other child;
- An imbalance of power. It involves someone (or a group of people) who are stronger in some way than the person who is being bullied. They may be older, stronger, there may be more of them or they may have a 'hold' over the person (e.g. they know a secret about them).

Children will learn that bullying is not:

- A one-off fight or argument;
- When a friend is sometimes thoughtless.
- When a peer makes a one off unkind comment

We teach our pupils about four different types of bullying:

1. Verbal e.g. hurtful comments and threats, name-calling (this includes 'Hate Crime' - racist and homophobic comments);
2. Physical e.g. hitting, kicking, taking belongings;
3. Emotional e.g. staring, glaring, leaving people out, spreading rumours;
4. Cyber e.g. using technology to hurt someone through a variety of media - text messages, comments on social networks.

Why do children bully?

- They want to be 'in' with the cool gang;
- It feels like fun - they don't realise how much it hurts;
- They dislike or are jealous of someone;
- It makes them feel powerful or respected;
- It gets them what they want (sweets, money);
- They are bullied themselves and are taking out their hurt and anger on someone who won't fight back;

- They are having problems in their life that are making them feel bad. They have copied behaviours learned from those around them.

REMEMBER:

People who are happy with themselves do not need to bully other people!

What does school do about bullying?

St Bede's Catholic Junior school aim to create a supportive, inclusive environment that promotes a culture of mutual respect, consideration and care for others, which will be upheld by all.

In all aspects of school life there is an emphasis on the importance of relationships. Specific work is undertaken in Religious Education on topics like 'The Common Good', 'Building Bridges', 'Unity', 'Choices', 'Freedom and Responsibility' and 'Life Choices'. This is augmented in assemblies and in the schools Personal, Social and Health (PSHE) curriculum which is achieved through the SCARF programme provided by Coram Education.

The school has 12 pupils in Years 4-6 who have been trained (Diana Awards) to be Anti-Bullying Ambassadors. They have the skills to be able to identify bullying and work as part of a group to support children as part of everyday school life. They are active in school running a weekly friendship 'drop-in' session, monitoring class worry boxes and leading assemblies throughout the school year.

At school we have an Anti-Bullying policy which explains what to do if bullying is reported and what the school is doing to stop bullying happening in the first place.

This work helps us to stop bullying happening by:

- Making sure that all children and adults mean the same thing when they talk about bullying;
- Helping children to understand how bullying feels for the person being bullied;
- Making sure that all children feel OK about telling an adult when they think that bullying is going on;
- Making sure that all children know exactly what to do if they are being bullied, and feel confident that something will be done to stop it;
- Helping children enjoy, celebrate and respect the ways we are all different, as well as the ways in which we are similar, and to feel good about themselves.

How can I help at home?

The most important things that you can do to help your child to understand, help prevent, and deal with bullying are to:

- Know what your child will be learning about bullying at school (by reading the school Anti- Bullying policy or looking at the school's website);
- Encourage and support them to try out the skills they are learning in school;
- Be a good role model in the way you talk about others - so your child will learn that everybody deserves respect;
- Model empathy for others - talk about how other people might feel in different situations;
- Talk openly about what bullying is and how it feels;
- Make it safe for your child to share their worries about bullying with you, so they know they can rely on you to listen to them and support them;
- Talk to your child about the different types of bullying;
- Teach them how to use social media safely, and be a positive role model.

Don't worry that your children are not listening to a word you say - worry that they are watching everything you do!

How do I know if my child is being bullied?

If you think your child may be being bullied, look out for:

- Behaviour changes,
- Withdrawal,
- Not wanting to go to school,
- Lots of stomach-aches, headaches or non-specific illness. (In addition always seek medical advice if symptoms persist)

Sometimes these ailments will be real, and sometimes they may be made-up, but whether the illness is real or not, the worry certainly is, so it needs to be taken seriously.

Help your child to talk to you. Use books and TV plots to open up discussions about bullying. With younger children dolls, teddies or puppets are a good way to help them talk about their worries and feelings.

What should I do if I think my child is being bullied?

Your child may not tell you or us that he or she is being bullied. If you suspect it is happening, look out for the signs (see above).

If your child tells you they are being bullied, getting angry and threatening to visit the school or parent of the other child will only frighten your child further.

Praise your child for telling you and reassure them that they have done the right thing in letting you know what is happening.

Listen to your child, accept your child's feelings, encourage them to talk about their worries and don't belittle what they are going through- however minor it may seem to you the feelings are very real for them.

Don't jump in with advice or try to immediately solve the problem for them. Listen to their ideas, and unless they are likely to end up in serious danger or trouble, agree to let them try out their ideas.

If you tell your child to fight back or say something 'clever' to the people they may well end up feeling twice as bad. They might get into trouble, they might get hurt, they might be laughed at more and they will feel worse - not only are they bullied, but they have failed to stop it as well.

Bullying destroys self-confidence, so if your child is being bullied, work doubly hard to help them feel valued and important.

Help your child to think about what they would like to happen, and ask how you can help—if your child feels in danger; you will need to make sure that they have a plan for keeping safe. Talk about ways of avoiding the children doing the bullying, e.g. staying with a group of friends, staying in safe areas, knowing who to go to for help etc.

Tell your child that you have to inform your child's class teacher at this point and agree how you can do this in the best way so your child does not feel anxious about this happening.

If the bullying carries on after your child has carried out their own strategies, and any that you agree together, there are further steps that you can take:

Collect any evidence e.g. keep a diary of exactly what was said or done, when and where, keep any text messages, emails, or posts on social media.

Alert the school. Make sure you talk to your child before you do this but be clear that this is what you must do. Agree with your child when is the best time for you to do this - maybe during lesson time or after school

When you talk to us at school please be specific about what has been happening.

Ask us what we will do and what we would advise you to do. Remember that we all want the best for your child. We will draw up a plan together with follow up steps.

What should my child do if they are being bullied?

We need to help our children to feel safe to tell us if they know bullying is happening. Children can tell any member of staff in school or any of our Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.

What should my child do if they witness bullying?

Nine times out of ten bullying involves witnesses. So why don't they stop it or tell? Children tell us they don't tell because:

- They worry they will become targets themselves;
- It is not cool to be seen as a tell-tale;
- It is hard to go against the crowd.

The evidence shows that- the more children talk and tell others about any bullying they see going on, the less it happens.

Talk to your child about what they can do to support a child who is being bullied. They could befriend the child and be kind to them, include them in their games and tell an adult what is going on.

What should I do if my child is bullying others?

If you are told that your child is bullying others don't immediately dismiss the idea or rush into punishing them. Try not to call them a bully as we are all capable of bullying others.

Your child is not a monster. When you talk, stay calm and remind them that it is the behaviour you do not like not them.

Listen to what they have to say. If they deny it, arrange to see the teacher. Stay calm and listen to what the teacher has to say.

Talk to your child about how the other person feels- they may not realise how much they are hurting, frightening or upsetting the other person.

Help your child to develop confidence to make friends- happy people don't need to bully others.

Why don't schools just get rid of bullies?

Parents are often surprised when schools don't automatically exclude children who are bullying others. As parents, our first concern will always be for our own child's safety and happiness.

There are three reasons why schools don't automatically exclude bullies:

1. If schools excluded every child who has ever bullied that would include many children. Many children in every school have either been bullied, seen bullying or bullied themselves. There is no evidence that children are born bullies or victims- they change roles according to where they are and who they are with.
2. If schools simply moved the problem onto another school others will continue to suffer. The best thing to do is to deal with the problem and try to stop the child from bullying altogether. The school may have the right to exclude them if it is extreme behaviour that does not improve following all necessary actions required of a school, injuring or harming others.
3. There are always ways of changing bullying behaviour. Helping the bully to understand how the other child is feeling and the effect of bullying on them, teaching them to stand up to peer pressure from others, giving them support to manage the problems they are facing in their own lives- all of these things can change bullying behaviour for good. This also requires honesty and support from everyone.

Try to understand what we are doing at school and why. When children who are bullied are asked what they want to happen they very rarely mention punishing the other child or revenge, they almost always say- **'I just want it to stop'**

Try to ask your child about **what happened that was 'good' in their day** to help them focus on positives and think of happy parts of their day. This will help them and you.

These websites offer useful information about how to deal with bullying, for parents:

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

<http://www.bullybusters.org.uk/>