

Loreto Sisters

Anti Bullying Policy

Bullying is defined as unwanted, negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons and which is repeated over time.

These guidelines relate to:

- Children bullying other children.
- Adults bullying children.
- Children bullying adults.

All children and adults who participate in activities will be treated with dignity and respect by the adult leaders in charge and by the other children involved. Bullying will not be accepted and everybody has a responsibility to report any incidents of bullying to the leader of the activity. There will be adequate supervision and monitoring by staff and volunteers at all activities which will help to prevent bullying. If a member of staff or volunteer witnesses bullying or suspects that bullying is taking place, s/he will follow the procedure outlined below.

What is bullying:

- Bullying is intentional, repeated and aggressive physical, verbal or psychological behaviour directed by an individual or group against others.
- Bullying can occur at any age, in any environment, and can be long or short term.
- Any child/young person can be a victim of bullying.
- Bullying can be perpetrated by adults towards children/young people, as well as children/ young people towards their peer group.
- Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, cannot be described as bullying.
- However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.
- Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

Emotional:	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures).
Physical:	Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
Racist:	Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
Sexual:	Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
Homophobic:	Because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality.
Verbal:	Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
Cyber:	All areas of internet, such as email, internet chat room misuse and social networking sites. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities.
Subtle:	Unwelcome expression or gestures that is repeated and focused on an individual.
Perpetrated by adults:	When perpetrated by adults rather than by children, bullying behaviour could be regarded as physical or emotional abuse. Other major forms of abuse such as neglect and sexual abuse are not normally termed 'bullying'.

An investigation into alleged bullying behaviour should take place without undue delay and where at all possible to be concluded within one month.

Signs of Bullying:

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that s/he is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Does not want to attend activities anymore.
- Has poor or deteriorating schoolwork or an inability to concentrate.
- Has possessions which are damaged or " go missing" or continually "loses" money/belongings.
- Changes his/her usual routine or is reluctant to go out.
- Becomes withdrawn, depressed, anxious, or behaviour which is regressive.
- Starts stammering, becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is bullying other children or siblings.
- Begins to feel ill frequently, stops eating, is self-harming, attempts/threatens suicide or runs away.
- Cries him/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares but remains frightened to say what's wrong.
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone and is nervous or jumpy when a cyber-message is received.
- Has repeated signs of bruising and injuries.
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

This list is not exhaustive and there could be other signs of bullying that may not appear on this list.

Prevention:

- Include children in discussions about what bullying is and why it can't be tolerated.
- Encourage children to take responsibility and report any incidents of bullying to leader.
- Draw up a group contract /code of behaviour for children.
- Sign a group contract /code of behaviour.
- Adequate supervision and monitoring at activities.

Procedures:

1. All incidents of bullying should be brought to the attention of the leader of the activity who will record and investigate the incident as well as any action taken. All incidents will be recorded on an accident / incident report form and kept on file.
2. The leader will speak separately to all involved, in order to get all sides of the story. The leader should also speak to others who have witnessed the incident(s), if appropriate. The leader will interview all involved in a calm manner and will seek answers to what, where, when, who and why.
3. Parents should be informed of any incidents of bullying and should meet with leader to discuss the problem. Parents should also be informed of any action taken in relation to the incident.
4. If the respondent to the alleged bullying is a child, their parent/guardian will be informed of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation.
5. If the person dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has not taken place, the following action will be taken:
 - a) The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying did not take place.
 - b) Support will be given to the complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) if necessary.
 - c) A meeting will be arranged between the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator to discuss the issues involved if both are agreeable and it is deemed appropriate.
6. If the leader concludes that bullying has taken place, the following action will be taken:
 - a) The complainant, alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and the reasons why it was concluded that bullying took place.
 - b) Support will be given to the victim.
 - c) 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.
 - d) A meeting will be held with the perpetrator to discuss the bullying behaviour. S/he will be informed of the action that will be taken as a result of bullying behaviour.

Sanction:

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 the leader and at least one other person responsible for the activity and should be appropriate to the seriousness of the incident(s).

If the perpetrator of the bullying is a child, the parent/guardian of the child and the child will be informed of the action that will be taken.

The options for action include:

- For serious incidents involving children:
not allowing them to participate in any further activities.
- For less serious incidents involving children:
allowing the child to continue to participate in the 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.
- Providing support to the child to get them to understand that their behaviour is not acceptable and monitoring their behaviour.

Note: Bullying of a child by an adult is abuse.

If the perpetrator of the bullying is an adult, the following people will be informed of the action that will be taken:

- The province / local leader.
- The respondent.

The options for action include:

- For serious incidents involving a member of staff:
there is no difference in the action taken in relation to a paid member of staff or a volunteer, in so far as the complaint / concern will be investigated in the same way. A paid member of staff has rights that a volunteer does not have, so s/he could be suspended on full pay during the investigation, whereas the volunteer would be asked to leave during the investigation without any form of compensation.
- For incidents involving staff/volunteers from other organisations:
informing their organisation of the incident.

Church personnel will be aware of their responsibilities to report concerns, allegations and suspicions of unacceptable behaviour towards children by other church personnel or volunteers without fear and in confidence. Refer to the Loreto whistle-blowing policy.

