

Edmund Rice College



Anti-Bullying Policy

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Developing An Anti-Bullying Policy

The School's View

Edmund Rice College is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

Introduction

Bullying can/may occur in all schools. Recent research carried out in a representative sample of 120 schools in Northern Ireland found that, in the schools surveyed, forty percent of primary pupils and thirty percent of post-primary pupils claimed to have been bullied during the period of the study. Five percent of primary pupils and two percent of post-primary pupils reported that they had suffered bullying for several years. The research also revealed that a quarter of the primary pupils surveyed, and thirty percent of the post-primary pupils, admitted to having taken part in bullying themselves during the period of the study. All the evidence indicates that bullying happens in the best regulated schools, and is not age- or gender-specific, although sometimes it is underplayed by schools and teachers. The fact that incidents have not been reported to staff does not mean that they are not happening, and there is no room for complacency.

Schools have a significant role to play in the emotional and personal development of its pupils, and this policy aims to help Edmund Rice College:

- Recognise bullying.
- Develop an anti-bullying culture consistent with its positive ethos, pastoral care policy and whole-school policy on good behaviour, and
- Develop a specific anti-bullying policy to support it.

The policy will also offer help in dealing with bullying firmly and positively when it happens, with an eye to preventing it happening again.

The Responsibilities of Staff

Our staff will:

- ✓ Foster in our pupils' self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
- ✓ Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- ✓ Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully, and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens.
- ✓ Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- ✓ Listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them. All bullying incidents should be recorded on SIMS.
- ✓ Report suspected cases of bullying to appropriate school authorities. Copy of incident form to be recorded, filed and a copy given to Mr McMeekin.
- ✓ Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken by arranging a meeting with parents.
- ✓ Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

The Responsibilities of Pupils

We expect our pupils to:

- ✓ Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- ✓ Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- ✓ Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:

- ✓ Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.
- ✓ Report the matter to the appropriate authorities.

The Responsibilities of Parents

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- ✓ Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
- ✓ Advising their children to report any bullying to appropriate authorities and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils.
- ✓ Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying.
- ✓ Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
- ✓ Keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying.
- ✓ Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their child is not involved.
- ✓ Co-operating with the school, if their child is accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the child who is bullied and for the bullies themselves.

The Responsibilities of All

Everyone should:

- ✓ Work together to combat and, hopefully in time, to eradicate bullying.

What is Bullying?

It is important to distinguish bullying behaviour from other behaviour that can cause unhappiness and distress. Most definitions of bullying include the following characteristics – the list can be helpful in assessing whether behaviour is bullying.

Bullying always hurts, sometimes physically, always emotionally. It wears down self-esteem and self-confidence because it makes those who are bullied feel weak and inadequate.

Bullying is intentional, children can hurt other children by accident. Bullying, however, is always intentional and meant to cause some sort of harm, whether it is physical or verbal. This behaviour may persist even after the victim has asked the bully to stop.

Bullying behaviour is usually repeated, or there is a threat of it being repeated, with the bullied in a constant state of worry and fear, though children can be disturbed enough after a single incident to phone ChildLine.

There is an imbalance of power so that the bullied is unable to prevent it. This imbalance can be caused by a number of factors, including age, size, or differences in ability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation (actual or perceived) and social class. As the bullying relationship develops an imbalance increases.

What makes bullying different?

As children grow up, they have a range of experiences. At the time, some are unpleasant and cause unhappiness. By their own actions they sometimes cause others to be unhappy. But most of these experiences and actions do not amount to bullying.

Name-calling

Many children have affectionate nicknames given to them by their peers. But name-calling becomes bullying when the intention is to hurt, when the person using the name or expression wants to cause offence and knows, or should know, that it is likely to.

Physical play and fun fighting

Children play together and often that play is physical, and sometimes includes fun fighting. Accidents can happen and children can get hurt in their play. Some sports are based on physical contact and physical contests, but the behaviour in these sports is bound by rules. In bullying there is an intention to hurt. This may involve continuing when it is clear that someone is finding the behaviour unpleasant or painful.

Friendships

As children grow up their interests develop and their friendships change. They disagree and fall out, and may say things that are hurtful. When children stop playing and meeting together, one or both can feel excluded and experience a deep sense of loss. This becomes bullying when one or other continues to act in a way that deliberately causes further hurt.

Those who work with children need to help them to be sensitive and to understand the possible effects of their behaviour on others.

Bullying relationships

Bullying often involves two or more people. Nearly three out of four children who call ChildLine about bullying are being bullied by a group rather than a single person.

Within the group there are often one or two dominant individuals – the ringleaders – who are controlling the situation. They are supported by others who actively join in. Some may feel pressured to bully even though they know it's wrong. In some ways they too are being bullied.

Cyberbullying – bullying via the internet and mobile phones – can mean that children are no longer safe in their own home.

Apart from cyberbullying most bullying happens in front of an audience. Some in the audience are passive bystanders who do nothing to stop it. Others are active reinforcers who support the bullies by laughing and shouting encouragement. Both look on from the relative safety of the sidelines, maybe feeling guilty because they know bullying is wrong, maybe trying to avoid being the next victim. Both are effectively encouraging the bully to continue their behaviour.

The bullied may feel alone and isolated and that they have lost their friends. They may be afraid to join in activities for fear of meeting the bullies. Their friends may not have the strength to stand up to the bullies and are afraid of the consequences for themselves if they report it. Sometimes, the friends may feel pressured into joining those bullying.

Anyone can be the target of bullying, but in many cases the person bullying picks on someone they know, perhaps a former friend.

It is not unusual for a bully in one relationship to be bullied in another. In a ChildLine survey, 15 per cent of primary school children and 12 per cent of secondary school students surveyed said that they had both bullied and been bullied in the last year.

Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can take place wherever children come together: in and outside schools, at home and in the community.

An Anti-Bullying Alliance survey showed that 35 per cent of a sample of seven to 18-year-olds had been bullied outside of school. The majority (55 per cent) also thought that about half or more of the bullying that happens in school actually starts outside of school and four in 10 said bullying outside of school was more worrying as adults weren't around to help.

In primary schools, pupils identify the playground at break and lunchtimes as being unsafe, particularly where there are no “quiet” areas and where games and activities are not organised. In secondary schools, pupils often mention the corridors between lessons as well as toilets and changing rooms. In both, it is where there is a lack of supervision.

Why do some children bully?

We should remember that, whatever the reason, bullying is never acceptable and must always be challenged.

There are different theories about why some children bully. For some, the behaviour is occasional and out of character. Something may have happened that acts as a trigger. They usually behave well towards others and can be helped to stop the bullying behaviour because they understand it's wrong and are keen to put things right.

For others, bullying behaviour in their relationships is the norm. Some lack the personal and social skills to change and have low empathy with others, while some have considerable social skills and are popular with both peers and adults. Some are leaders and able to manipulate others into carrying out the bullying while having no direct involvement themselves.

For some it is learned behaviour and may result from attitudes and values that are prejudiced. For these children, it is difficult to change without considerable support.

Why are some children bullied?

There are no simple answers and there can be many reasons.

Any child can be the target of bullying. Often it starts because a chance meeting gives the bully the opportunity.

Bullying behaviour often focuses on a difference, which may be physical or emotional or relate to a person's background. The behaviour seeks to emphasise and exaggerate the difference, using it to make the target feel bad about themselves.

However, some children are bullied for no obvious reason. In a ChildLine survey, none of the children who admitted bullying singled out their own or the bullied's individual characteristics. Indeed, the bullied can be a former friend.

Children are more susceptible to bullying when they are experiencing stress in their lives. And sometimes children have a poor self-image and low self-confidence, and appear anxious and insecure. They may be sensitive and quiet, and have few if any real friends. They may seek to avoid rather than face and react to unpleasant incidents by withdrawing and crying.

What form does bullying take?

Some bullying is direct: it is physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour and usually done to the person. The child being bullied knows who is doing it.

Physical bullying involves an attack or the threat of an attack. It includes hitting, pushing, pulling, pinching and kicking, taking possessions such as a bag, mobile phone or money, or using threats to force someone to do something against their will.

Verbal bullying, the commonest form, includes name-calling and teasing when it is not acceptable to the child on the receiving end. It may involve malicious comments about someone the bullied feels close to, particularly family or boy/girlfriends.

Non-verbal bullying includes ignoring someone or leaving them out, and making offensive gestures or facial expressions.

Indirect bullying includes producing malicious graffiti and spreading rumours.

Again, the rumours may refer to others the bullied feels close to.

Developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have made possible more indirect forms of bullying via mobile phones and the internet. This is known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying

Here are some examples:

- Text messages that are threatening or spread discomfoting rumours.
- Still images and video clips captured on and circulated by mobile phone to cause embarrassment to the subject, who may not even be aware they have been photographed or filmed – this includes “happy slapping”: videoed physical attacks.
- Threatening emails, often using a fictitious name or someone else’s name.
- Anonymous, silent calls or abusive messages to mobile phones – sometimes the bullied person’s phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the owner of the phone is responsible.
- Instant messaging (IM) conveying threats or insults in real-time conversations. Snap chat, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp & Online Gaming.
- Defamatory messages broadcast on websites, blogs and personal or social networking websites.
- Menacing or upsetting responses in chat rooms.

As with more conventional forms of bullying, many children tell no one that they are being bullied.

Cyberbullying follows the bullied into their homes so they have nowhere they can feel private or safe. They may not know who is responsible, and cannot easily defend themselves. It can take place at any time and the cyberbullies can, very quickly, communicate their messages to a wide and unknown audience across the world.

Cyberbullies believe they can’t be traced and therefore do things they might be afraid to do more directly. They may also direct their bullying against adults – for example, by making malicious accusations against school staff.

What is the focus of bullying behaviour?

Difference, real or imagined, is at the heart of most bullying.

Appearance, ability and home

The difference is often about appearance, maybe physical characteristics such as size – too tall, too small, too fat, and too thin – or a particular physical or health related feature. It may be about the quality or style of clothes.

It can also be about ability or lack of it. As a result, some children fear being considered “too bright” or “too good” by their peers. For some it is their inability or weakness in some aspect of life that opens them to bullying. Children with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable.

Family or home circumstances can be the focus for attack and ridicule – e.g., perceived wealth or status, a family member’s disability or imprisonment.

Prejudice

Prejudice-driven or identity-related bullying focuses particularly on:

- Ethnicity, faith and culture.
- Gender or sexual orientation (actual or perceived).
- Disability – Learning & Physical.

Here, the bullied is attacked not only as an individual but as a representative of their family, group or community and, in the case of ethnicity, faith and culture, for the background that gives them their identity. This is damaging, not just to the individuals involved but also to the wider community. Here are some examples of these types of bullying in more detail.

Racist bullying

Racist bullying is intentionally hurtful behaviour against someone because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, religion, national background or current status. Most racist bullying targets people from black and minority ethnic communities, but it is not exclusively so. It can be anyone. There are groups who often experience racist bullying – especially travellers, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Racist bullying includes:

- Name calling and derogatory remarks focusing on characteristics such as country of origin, culture or skin colour, language and way of speaking, food, dress.
- Stereotyping.
- Discrimination – rejection, exclusion and unfair treatment.

Sexual bullying

Sexual bullying is any bullying behaviour, by boys or girls that is based on a person's gender or sexuality (real or perceived). It may be directed against girls or boys or young people who are transsexual.

Sexual bullying includes:

- Referring to someone's sexuality (real or perceived) or gender, or using sexual words, as a way of humiliating them.
- Threatening or joking about serious and frightening subjects like rape.
- Gossiping, spreading rumours or writing graffiti about someone's sexual activity.
- Touching someone in a way or on parts of the body that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Homophobic bullying is one kind of sexual bullying directed against:

- Young people who are lesbian, bisexual, gay or transgender (LBGT) or thought to be.
- Children with LGBT parents, guardians, family members or friends.
- Staff who are LGBT or thought to be.

In a survey of school pupils, the LGBT campaigning organisation, Stonewall, found that almost two thirds of LGBT children and young people had experienced homophobic bullying and that more than half had never told anyone at the time.

An estimated 2,725 young people call ChildLine each year to talk about sexual orientation, homophobia or homophobic bullying. More than half are male even though males account for only a quarter of all calls to ChildLine.

Casual homophobic language is common, and although younger children may not fully understand the words themselves they often do understand that “gay”, for example, can be used in derogatory and hurtful ways.

Bullying of deaf and disabled children, children with special educational needs

Bullying of deaf and disabled children, children with deaf and disabled family members, and children with special educational needs and autism are particularly vulnerable to bullying. They may find it more difficult to build positive relationships, can feel neglected and rejected, can be less able to protect themselves and speak out or report what is happening. The nature of the disability may mean that others find it more difficult to recognise that someone is being bullied, and to be able to distinguish between the characteristics of the disability and the effects of bullying.

Parents and guardians

Bullying affects the parents of those involved. If their child is bullied they live with the anxieties and worries it causes, and may themselves experience a sense of hopelessness at being unable to protect their child. Sometimes a child who is bullied starts to bully someone else within the family; usually a younger sibling but it may be a parent.

What is particularly difficult is for a parent to acknowledge that their child is bullying, and to feel that they can be open about this and seek help.

What pupils need to recognise about bullying:

Pupils within Edmund Rice College need to understand:

- ✓ That they have a right not to be bullied at school.
- ✓ That it is the bully who has the problem, not them, and they are not somehow to blame if they are bullied.
- ✓ That they are not alone, despite what the bully may have done or said to make them feel so.
- ✓ That they cannot-and are not expected to-deal with a bullying situation by themselves, and they need to get help.
- ✓ That they need to speak out, and should trust the teachers to take their concerns seriously and to support them.
- ✓ That they have personal responsibilities-to tell, if they become a bully's target, and to help and protect any other pupil who is being bullied.

It also needs to be recognised that bullying may not take the form of overtly aggressive, violent or frightening behaviour. It can be a calculated, repeated series of apparently minor incidents (e.g. ‘accidental’ shoves, tripping, wetting of clothing in toilets, dropping packed lunch on the ground, hiding of schoolbag, workbooks etc), so that, when challenged, the bully can make the incident seem trivial, and appear affronted and even victimised him- or herself. Pupils should therefore be encouraged to keep a diary or log of incidents in which they felt they were being threatened, even if they felt at the time that they were unable to speak to anyone else about it: such a log could later, when they feel more able to speak about it, demonstrate a number of incidents, or a regularity and pattern of behaviour, which, evidentially, become compelling.

Making it easier for pupils to talk about bullying and raise concerns:

If bullying is to be tackled effectively in Edmund Rice College, it is imperative that all pupils know that staff are accessible, that they will listen carefully and sympathetically to their concerns, that they will take into account the pupils' own views on how best to help them, and that they will initiate an appropriate course of action. In Edmund Rice College, the pupil's obvious avenue for support is to the Form Teacher, who should make sure that he or she either makes time immediately to listen to the pupil's concerns, or arranges a more suitable time, if possible the same day. Opportunities for pupils to raise their concerns could also be arranged at certain times in the week, when appropriate members of staff are routinely available, or an integral part of the Personal Development programme, e.g. form period.

Sometimes, however, despite best endeavours, children can be reluctant to approach a member of staff about their worries. It is Edmund Rice College's intention to ensure that pupils are made aware, in discussion and by information prominently displayed on notice boards, or organisations outside the school which they can contact to talk about bullying. Through discussion, involving the whole class, the pupils will be made aware of their right not to be bullied, and what they themselves can do as bystanders to stop bullying incidents taking place and protect their peers.

How can parents/guardians raise concerns?

Parents/guardians can raise concerns in a number of ways. The following points are basic guidelines:

- Personal contacts i.e. visit school.
- Telephone call.
- Contact through son/daughter or another family member.
- Letter to school.

It should be remembered that the school takes seriously any contact from parents/guardians concerning the potential bullying of their child.

How can Edmund Rice College help prevent pupils becoming targets for bullies?

Being popular and being able to communicate effectively reduces the likelihood of being bullied. Research indicates that pupils are less likely to be bullied if they are:

- ✓ Self-confident, and assertive without being aggressive.
- ✓ Physically robust.
- ✓ Socially aware and in accord with accepted norms.
- ✓ Flexible, unselfish and co-operative.
- ✓ Modest, unassuming and willing to recognise achievement in other.

In their daily contacts with pupils in Edmund Rice College teachers will work at developing these attributes in pupils who lack them, focusing most particularly on self-confidence and self-esteem. This will reduce the possibility of the pupil being bullied, and, perhaps even more importantly, it will also reduce the likelihood of their becoming bullies; and it will also help their personal development more widely and improve their motivation.

Every teacher needs to focus on fostering self-confidence and self-esteem; in every pupil, in every lesson, every day.

Signs and Symptoms

In spite of a positive and supportive climate within Edmund Rice College, pupils may still be reluctant to report instances of bullying, perhaps because they are fearful of the consequences. It is often left to an observant parent or teacher to detect signs of emotional distress in the pupil and, in time, to identify bullying as its cause. Parents and teachers must, therefore, be vigilant at all times for such signs, for example:

- ❖ Reluctance to travel home on the school bus, and insistence on being collected by their parents. Pupils who are being bullied may not walk home at the same time as other pupils, may look for excuses to stay later in school, or may look for different routes to and from school.
- ❖ They may seek reasons for not attending school, or begin to play truant.
- ❖ They may lose possessions, such as pens and books, and their workbooks may be destroyed or the work in them defaced. Items of school uniform and games kit may be mislaid, glasses may be damaged and packed lunches spoilt.
- ❖ Being continually in need of money. Pupils who are being bullied may tell their parents that they have lost money or used it for unusual purposes. In reality, it may have been stolen or used to placate the bully.
- ❖ Trying to avoid going out to play at break or lunchtimes and, if persuaded to, remaining close to an adult supervisor.
- ❖ They may ask to sit with someone else in class, or try to avoid contact with certain other pupils.

(This list is not exhaustive and there may, of course, be other causes for such behaviour).

Supporting the child who has been bullied

If, in whatever circumstances, a teacher is alerted to the possibility of bullying, it will be necessary to deal with it firmly and sensitively, and with the necessary degree of priority. Teachers should listen sympathetically to, and take seriously, what the pupils who have been targeted by the bullies have to say. They should assure the bullied pupils that they are not in any way to blame. Support and protection should be promised, and agreement reached with them on an appropriate course of action. Bullying, especially when serious or prolonged, can have lasting emotional and psychological ill-effects, and a distressed pupil should be offered support from a sympathetic teacher. In serious cases, it will be necessary to offer the pupil counselling, whether from an appropriately trained teacher or arranged through an outside body.

Dealing with the bully

As well as ensuring that pupils who are bullying are dealt with in accordance with Edmund Rice College's school policy and procedures, it will be necessary to work with these pupils to try to help them change their unacceptable behaviour. Bullying behaviour should be treated in the same way as any other form of behavioural difficulty. The Form Teacher, Year Head, Head of Pastoral Care/Assistant Head of Pastoral Care should in the first instance talk calmly and objectively with them, asking them to think about, and talk about, the implications of their behaviour for the pupil who was their target, probing for any underlying reasons, and seeking assurances that it will not be repeated.

Since research has shown that a high proportion of bullies were themselves, or remain, the victims of abuse, Edmund Rice College must consider whether the child protection procedures need to be instigated for the

bully. If the school decides that these procedures are not warranted, the school still needs to consider how best to work with the bully to change their behaviour. This can involve talking their behaviour through with the bully, to allow the child scope to think about and understand their own motives and encourage more socially acceptable behaviour. It should also involve discussion with the pupil's parents, to help identify any relevant background information and secure their support for the remedial action to be taken. Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to discuss the matter with the SENCO and to put a behaviour programme in place to address the bullying pupil's behavioural problems.

If the outcome of the bullying incident involves the bully and the target being separated, for classes, break-time, lunch-breaks and/or leaving time, the school should be prepared for the possibility that inaccessibility may move the bully to pick another target. This possibility should be borne in mind, without leading to oppressive supervision, as the bully's group is supervised during the school day.

Dealing with bullying as it happens:

If an instance of bullying does occur witnessed by staff, they should:

- ✓ Defuse the situation by separating the target from the bully or bullies.
- ✓ Disperse any bystanders.
- ✓ Act firmly in a measured manner, avoiding any sudden movements which might be construed as aggression.
- ✓ Indicate clearly to the bullies that the school does not tolerate bullying under any circumstances, and that they will be dealt with later.
- ✓ Provide reassurance, support and protection for the pupil who was the target, and set the soonest possible time (if not immediately) for the responsible teacher to discuss with them what happened, the background, and what should not happen to make things better.

Actions subsequent to the incident will include:

- ✓ In addition to administering sanctions to those responsible, the incident will be reported to the Form teacher and the Year Head. The Year Head will then talk through with the bully or bullies the nature and implications of their behaviour, and encourage them not to take part in any form of bullying in the future.
- ✓ Arranging for pastoral support to be provided for the pupil who was the target, and for the bully (if they so wish).
- ✓ In serious cases, offering the target pupil, and the bully, counselling, either from a trained teacher or from an outsider body.
- ✓ Consulting with the parents (of both the bullied pupil and the bully) and informing them of any action taken or contemplated.
- ✓ Compiling a brief report of the incident, the action taken and its outcomes, and any follow-up activity undertaken.

Staff when confronted with evidence of bullying should not:

- ✓ Minimise its importance or ignore it.
- ✓ Assume the matter will resolve itself in time.
- ✓ Allow or encourage the pupils to attempt to sort things out by themselves.
- ✓ Challenge or threaten the bully with physical violence.
- ✓ Act in a manner which might appear aggressive and escalate the situation.

Bullying is often reported to a school by a parent / guardian. Such complaints should be met openly and sympathetically, investigated promptly and thoroughly, and responded to within a promised number of working days. Where the complaint is made in writing, the school should always respond in writing, even if this is to confirm a conversation.

Strategies Edmund Rice College use to prevent bullying

1. Personal Conduct:

Children recognise when staff are respectful and caring towards others. Through their own behaviour adults working with children establish what is acceptable and unacceptable, including bullying. In Edmund Rice College all staff dealing with children are encouraged to be careful at all times about their personal conduct.

2. Supervision:

Children say that the level and quality of supervision are important factors in making them feel safe. In Edmund Rice College it is accepted that the supervision of all children is extremely important. Staff carry out supervision duties throughout the school day. Evidence indicates that bullying thrives in the places that students perceive staff don't go. The supervisory staff are trained to watch out for:

- (a) Children who seem unhappy or distressed, alone or left out.
- (b) Children involved in physical games in which they might be unwilling participants.
- (c) Any groupings that suggest an imbalance of power and unwilling participation.

Staff are also encouraged to listen actively to what children are saying:

- (d) Is it prejudiced or offensive in other ways?
- (e) Is it intended to humiliate?
- (f) Is it sarcastic or teasing in ways that might be hurtful?

3. Developing the right ethos:

It is important that all schools should be realistic and acknowledge that bullying can happen. At the same time, they should be clear that it is never acceptable and regularly convey strong anti-bullying messages. In Edmund Rice College this strategy of conveying a strong message to all students that bullying in any form is not acceptable is on-going throughout the school year. Students hear the message at assemblies, form class and in individual subject classes. The message is re-enforced in PSE classes as well as educating the students on what to do if bullying happens. This approach helps contribute to an ethos in which bullying is less likely to happen, and if it does, will be noticed and responded to appropriately and effectively.

4. Anti-bullying week:

Edmund Rice College participates fully with the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forums each year. Along with hundreds of other schools Edmund Rice College takes part in the week aimed at highlighting bullying to and from school, and within school itself. Students are involved in conferences, group discussions, projects and cross-curricular activities. Participation in competitions is also encouraged. The week is an integral part of the school year and supports the on-going education of the students in this important area.

Regular Surveys:

Throughout the school year students are surveyed on matters relating to their experiences relating to the school's approach to the issue of bullying and their own personal experiences. Anti-Bullying surveys take place every November during Anti-Bullying Week. This information helps paint a picture of how successful the school is regarding its approach to bullying.

5. Posters and information materials:

In the Edmund Rice College posters relating to bullying and how to deal with it are located throughout the school

7. Classroom strategies:

As well as making full use of the Personal Development and activity task materials supplied, teachers within Edmund Rice College will also be encouraged to use techniques most suited for their own individual classroom needs.

Three recommended techniques are:

- a) Circle of Friends
- b) Circle Time
- c) Quality Circles.

Circle of Friends: 'Circle of Friends' is an inclusive approach for developing a support network of friendship, involving class peers, around an individual who is becoming isolated in class or in school. It was initiated in Canada in the 1980's and was originally used as a strategy to help children with physical and medical difficulties become and feel more included within mainstream educational environments. Since then it has been adapted and applied to children with a range of special educational needs such as emotional and behaviour difficulties, Asperger's Syndrome and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD).

The basic approach is as follows. A facilitator from outside the school (e.g. an educational psychologist) who has worked with the child obtains consent from the child and his/her parents to operate the scheme. He/she will then address the whole class group on relevant issues, e.g. friendship, the need to support each other, and asks for volunteers to take part in the project. The volunteers meet on a weekly basis and report how they have helped the 'focus child' and how they plan to do so in the forthcoming week. The approach can be used to enhance a range of social skills such as:

- Friendship-making
- Alternatives to aggression
- Classroom survival skills
- Dealing with feelings.

Circle Time: Circle Time was introduced into industry as a means of improving the quality of the goods produced by encouraging personnel at all levels to suggest ways of improving working procedures. It can be adapted for use at all levels in primary and post-primary school. School which use it report that, when used regularly and frequently as part of a planned programme of personal development, it can promote good relationships and positive attitudes.

Circle Time affords the opportunity for teacher and pupils to discuss issues in a non-threatening environment, where everyone's views are heeded, respected and valued. As the name suggests, the pupils sit in a circle with the teacher and take part in activities such as co-operative games, role-play and drama

(sometimes using puppets or masks) and other tasks involving listening and talking, designed to promote enjoyment, confidence and a healthy exchange of views. The length of Circle Time sessions will depend on the time available and the age, maturity and abilities of the pupils. In the context of promoting positive behaviour, Circle Time sessions could address topics such as desirable and undesirable behaviour, classroom routines or school rules, as well as bullying.

Quality Circles: Quality Circles are similar, but not identical, to Circle Time. The concept was first introduced in Japan in the 1950s, and is now used throughout the world by major industrial companies. They have also been used successfully by groups of teachers and, latterly, by groups of pupils. The principal features of a Quality Circle are that it:

- Meets regularly to address a specific topic (in this example, to suggest more effective ways of tackling bullying).
- Is made up of volunteers working under a trained leader; and
- Is small, comprising some 5-8 members.

Through their involvement in a Quality Circle, the pupils have an opportunity to use their experience and knowledge to achieve something worthwhile on behalf of the school. Their involvement also helps to develop in them a greater sense of responsibility, a more positive attitude to school, and enhanced self-esteem. If, however, the efforts of the Circle are to be successful, its members should have some training in problem-solving techniques. The training received and the practices in using such techniques are further contributions to the pupils' personal and social development.

8. Giving pupils' responsibility:

The student council in Edmund Rice College is consulted on the issue of bullying prevention. In the development of this policy their ideas were considered, and throughout the school year they are encouraged to come forward with ideas and suggestions on how to improve the student experience in school.

Who deals with a bullying incident in Edmund Rice College?

1. Form Teacher

The Form Teacher has a very important role to play in this process. He/she knows the pupil better than anyone else within the school structure. When a bullying incident occurs the Form Teacher should be informed immediately.

It is the Form Teacher's job to:

- All bullying incidents should be recorded on SIMS.
- Interview the student concerned to determine the seriousness of the incident.
- Listen sympathetically and provide reassurance.
- Inform Year Head of the incident.
- Where deemed necessary inform the designated Child Protection Teacher(s).

2. Year Head

The Year Head's role is important in that it provides the practical enforcement Interview individuals connected with the incident

- All bullying incidents should be recorded on SIMS.
- Consults with parents concerned (via telephone call), explaining what has happened and how the incident will be dealt with.
- Arrange interview with parents/guardians.
- Informs Head of Senior/Junior School about incident and the arrangements for parental interview.
- Determine with Head of Senior/Junior School the appropriate disciplinary action.
- Head of Senior/Junior School attends interview with Year Head.
- Written report forwarded to Head of Pastoral Care and information regarding outcome passed to Form Teacher.

3. Head of Pastoral Care (Assisted by Assistant Head of Pastoral Care)

Head of Pastoral Care consults with Form Teacher and Year Head on appropriate pastoral support to be provided, i.e.

- Form Teacher Support.
- Year Head Support.
- Pastoral Support.
- New Life Support.

Head of Pastoral Care will consult with parents at an interview to discuss findings of the written report.

Head of Pastoral Care will keep Principal informed on all serious bullying matters.

At all times in this process it should be remembered that the seriousness of the incident will dictate the appropriate response to the situation and also the level of awareness within the school structure. It is important that all stakeholders are kept informed at all times through telephone calls and formal meetings.

Remember the child is paramount

Take immediate action when required