004t- Whole School school antibullying policy

ESH Anti-Bullying Policy

Targeting bullying in an effective manner

EUROPEAN SCHOOL THE HAGUE

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The European Schools and the Accredited European Schools are educational institutions set up in the European Union's Member States.
They provide children with a multilingual and multicultural education at nursery, primary and secondary levels. The schools follow a specific curriculum and offer the European Baccalaureate diploma.

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Introduction

Every child needs love and understanding for the full and harmonious development of his/her personality.

- Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The anti-bullying policy described here stands as an effective approach towards monitoring for bullying situations and resolving them. As mentioned before, part of the development of the school will be an extension of this policy to offer education in social-emotional learning (through the implementation of Leefstijl), since this is a proven strategy towards decreasing bullying, together with a suitable program designed to decrease bullying.

The European School of The Hague (ESH) stands for being a safe school with an excellent pedagogical, social, learning and working environment for students and staff. We want all our students and staff to feel safe at school, therefore ESH has a zero-tolerance approach towards bullying.

ESH is a place for students to learn, to develop themselves, to feel part of the community and to grow into confident, well-educated young adults. In order for them to develop, a safe and healthy environment is necessary at school.

At ESH we work hard on prevention of bullying via the pastoral care of the mentors and class teachers. The purpose of this protocol is to prevent, confront and stop bullying.

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Defining bullying

Definition of bullying

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

Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a one-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private message, do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

However, placing a one-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people, will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Types of bullying

The following are examples of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils[1]:

Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'play fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text,

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[1] Definitions taken from: Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools, Irish Government.

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social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc. (ESH-Rijnlands Lyceum has a specific policy regarding Social Media)

Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Parties involved in a case of bullying

The bullied pupil: The victim of bullying, who often does not dare to share the situation with adults.

The bullying pupil: He or she (and sometimes a small group) leads the bullying actions, but is not the only aggressor.

The silent bystanders: Research has found that bystanders (witnesses in bullying situations) can mostly solve bullying problems, but actually intervene in less than 30% of all cases. The reasons for not intervening can be various. Some bystanders do not want to intervene in a bullying situation, because they actually sympathize with the bullies. One differentiates four groups of bystanders: assistants, reinforcers, outsiders and defenders. Assistants and reinforcers generally have a pro-bully attitude, while outsiders and defenders mostly hold a pro-victim attitude. Defenders are the ones actually protecting the victim and confronting the bully, while outsiders stay completely out of bullying situations[2].

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[2] Research taken from: *Bystanders in bullying situations: differences between participant roles and their reactions to manipulation.* Christina Hoffmann. University of Twente.

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The staff of the school: When bullying happens, students tend to hide it from teachers and school's staff. That is why it is important to be attentive and record any type of conflict and report it to the anti-bullying coordinator. It might seem an isolated incident, but it could be part of a much more complex case. All members of staff are requested to register all incidents in Safeguarding.

The mentor / class teacher: If a case of bullying happens in his/her group, the mentor/teacher will put in place the protocol to make sure bullying stops and to provide a safe place in class to all the students. The mentor/teacher will be the first contact person with parents and the one that will register every event in Safeguarding.

The parents: Parents know their children best, but sometimes secondary pupils do not want to share their problems with their parents, because they feel ashamed or guilty. It is important to always share with school any changes in children's behaviour or mood. Working together with the school might help prevent problems. Parent's first contact is their child's mentor, but the anti-bullying coordinator is available for questions, information or coaching.

The anti-bullying coordinator: ESH Secondary does not work with an anti-bullying coordinator but has 3 designated safeguarding leads who have access to all incidents recorded by teachers in Safeguarding. This way, there is an overview of what is happening in school with every student and see if there is a pattern of bullying incidents regarding any students. The support coordinator makes sure that the protocol is followed and that any case of bullying is controlled and ended. The support coordinator is also responsible to guide and coach mentors in case of difficult situations. The mentor with the cycle leader or the support coordinator will be in contact with parents and will follow-up with parents and students in all cases, to make sure students are feeling safe and the bullying has finished. ESH's current safeguarding leads are the school psychologist, the support coordinator and the support leader.

For ESH Primary this is a shared responsibility between the Support Coordinators. For the rest of this document, everywhere the **anti-bullying coordinator** is mentioned, this also relates to the role of the Primary School **Support Coordinators**. In November 2021, one staff member was specifically trained for Dutch standards, who also has access to the Safeguarding system; Ms Ingeborg Hendriks (i.hendriks@eshthehague.nl)

Management of ESH: In case sanctions are necessary, management will decide the sanctions that are appropriate to each case, depending on the seriousness of the situation. Management will also be contacted to intervene if steps 1 and 2 of the protocol have been followed and bullying persists. These sanctions are given in alignment with the Code of Behaviour (established at ESH in 2016).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the module of EduKey's software suite used by ESH to record all incidents regarding bullying and safety of students. It is a confidential program in which all incidents have to be recorded. This way, the anti-bullying coordinator can, on the one hand, observe a pattern of incidents and help

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prevent cases of bullying to develop and, on the other hand, oversee what steps are being followed in order to solve a case of bullying at school.

All mentors and teachers, as well as members of staff, have to be familiar with this program and are asked to record every single incident which involves two or more pupils. An incident that might look like a one-off, could be part of a pattern. Only by recording them all, can we have a real idea of what is going on among our pupils.

Prevention

It is important to work on prevention, and this is why several action points will happen throughout every single school year.

- Before the school year starts for our pupils, time will be allocated to transfer information from old mentors/class teachers, cycle leaders and the anti-bullying coordinator to the new mentors/class teachers. All mentors/teachers will be informed about any cases of bullying that have happened previously. This way, any simple incident will be taken in the appropriate context from the first day of school for our pupils.
- During the first weeks of school year (the golden weeks), all mentors & class teachers will follow a prevention program in order to create a safe environment in their group and will, then, work on the topic of bullying in their groups. The anti-bullying coordinator will provide material and ideas to all mentors and teachers.
- Every 5-6 weeks, the topic of bullying will be worked on in class again, in the framework of activities that will be organised by the anti-bullying coordinator throughout the year.

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Protocol of action step by step

1. The mentor/class teacher informs the antibullying coordinator about the situation. Ideas on how to handle the situation are shared. In consultation with the support coordinator and counsellor, the mentor/teacher prepares a first meeting with the affected students. They meet with affected students.
   a. The mentor/teacher will meet with the victim, will collect information and will reassure the student that school will be a safe place for him or her.
   b. The mentor/teacher will meet with the bully(ies) in a meeting of a clear warning character. Agreements about desired behavioural improvement are set down in writing and will be checked in 4-6 weeks' time. Parents of both parties are informed, always in person. If the facts involve a legal concern, police are informed.
   c. The mentor/teacher registers everything (outcome of all conversations and people involved) in **Safeguarding**. The mentor/teacher informs the anti-bullying coordinator of the outcome of the meetings and the anti-bullying coordinator designs a coherent plan for the case.
   d. Examples of plans: support group, solution-oriented approach. The plan is handed to the mentor, who will develop it in class.
2. The mentor monitors that the agreements made are being followed and that not more incidents happen. After 4-6 weeks, the mentor (again in consultation with the support coordinator and counsellor) meets with the students involved and follows up on the situation. In parallel, the anti-bullying coordinator checks the situation with the parents of the bullied student (after 1 week, after 2 weeks and after 4 weeks) and with the mentor.
3. If the bullying doesn't stop, there is a second round of meetings with the bully(ies) and his/their parents. This time the meeting is led by a management member of school. Bullies receive, again, a period of 4-6 weeks to improve their behaviour. Guidance can also be used to achieve behavioural change (school counsellor or appropriate guidance). In addition, (pedagogical) punitive measures are taken in place.
   a. The mentor/teacher registers everything in **Safeguarding** and informs the antibullying coordinator. The anti-bullying coordinator adjusts the plan.
4. The mentor/teacher monitors that the agreements made are being followed and that not more incidents happen. After a second period of 4-6 weeks, the mentor/teacher meets with the students involved and follows up on the situation. In parallel, the anti-bullying coordinator checks the situation with the parents of the bullied student (after 1 week, after 2 weeks and after 4 weeks) and with the mentor.
5. If the bullying behaviour does not stop after the before mentioned measures, an (internal) suspension will be imposed on the bullies by the school management, and obligatory supervision/assistance will be used to ensure behavioural change. Everything is registered in **Safeguarding** by the mentor/teacher, and school management informs the anti-bullying coordinator directly about the decisions taken.
6. If the bullying behaviour persists after the above measures, the school can proceed with removal of the bullies. School management follows the Protocol "Suspension and removal".

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School management informs directly the anti-bullying coordinator, and she registers the facts in **Safeguarding**.

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At ESH we actively use the strategies of the No Blame Approach. The steps used are described below. We call this the "support group" following a solution-oriented approach (1b of the previous protocol).

The No Blame Approach is an effective method in dealing with bullying situations, in Primary, Secondary and college environments as well (Maines and Robinson, 1994)[3].

The first thing the approach does is focus on how the victim is feeling; focusing attention on feelings draws attention away from blame. This causes the bully and supports to think about the impact of their behaviour.

Why it works

- It draws the bystanders and non-involved students into finding a solution to the problem.
- It is a whole school approach; it relies on group dynamics and the empathy of the group members.
- No one has to hide behind an untrue picture of what happened as no one is going to be blamed for anything that occurred.
- Nothing about this approach is manipulative or requires specific training beyond an understanding of the seven steps of the approach.
- Does not assume that teachers are or can become therapists as the approach is based upon those skills that a teacher already possesses- the ability to work effectively with individuals and groups.

The seven steps of the No-Blame Approach

1. Interview with the victim: talk to victim about their feelings, but do not question them about the incidents directly.
2. Convene a meeting with the people involved: teacher arranges to meet with the people who were involved (minus the victim).
3. Explain the problem: teacher tells them about the way the victim is feeling.
4. Share responsibility: the teacher does not attribute blame but states that they know the group is responsible and they can do something about it.
5. Ask the group for their ideas: each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier.

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[3] Maines, B. & Robinson, G. (1994). The No Blame Approach to Bullying. A paper presented to the British Association for the Advancement of Science 1994 Meeting- "Science in the World Around Us". Psychology Section—Coping with Challenging Behaviour. Pgs. 1-11

6. Leave it up to them: the teacher ends the meeting by passing on the responsibility to the group to solve the problem.
7. Meet them again: about a week later the teacher discusses with each student, including the victim, how things have been going.

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Restorative Conference

For situations that are not registered as bullying (one-off incidents) these are nevertheless serious incidents and are treated as such. If the relationship is not properly restored between the individuals involved, matters can escalate. Research shows that punishment has no effect on improving the relationship or that it leads to improved behaviour in the future. This is where Restorative Practises have a proven impact.

A Restorative Conference takes place after the incident, once everyone involved has calmed down. The teacher's role is similar to a counsellor. Their job is empathetic listening. Empathy isn't the same as sympathy. Empathy is understanding someone else's experience regardless of whether you agree or not. Often empathy is enough for a conflict to de-escalate because in many conflicts, people's most significant unmet need is to be heard and understood. If two or more people are reflecting, each person will have a different experience of events and it is likely that they won't agree. The listener's initial job is to listen to everyone's experience and check understanding.

The 7 Questions to behaviour reflection

1) What happened?

This is an opportunity to model the empathy and respect we want the pupil to develop. At this stage the objective is for the pupil to feel understood and heard.

- Listen (use facial gestures and body language, and small words eg. 'yes', 'okay', 'I see','um'… to demonstrate active listening)
- Ask questions if necessary
- Check if you understand properly (do you mean…?)
- If they use this as an opportunity to justify themselves, let them. The objective at this stage is for the pupil to feel heard and understood, not corrected.
- If what the pupil is saying isn't an accurate reflection of the truth ask inquisitive questions and check understanding: 'are you saying that this happened?'

2) How were you feeling? What did you need?

Simply identifying and understanding the underlying feelings and needs that cause behaviour can often be enough to resolve it.

- Suggest feelings and needs if necessary
- Respond with empathetic body language and facial expressions.

3) What happened after your behaviour?

The objective at this stage is to identify the natural consequence of the behaviour. This stage is fundamental for children to start to assess whether this behaviour is working for them but it is often lost once punishments and getting told off take place because they are distracted by a fight or flight response or resentment.

- Listen
- Ask questions
- Check understanding

4) Who else was involved? What do you think were their feelings and needs?

The objective at this stage is to help the pupil develop empathy and emotional intelligence towards others. How you modelled empathy when listening to the pupil in stage one will directly impact how well the pupil will be able to empathise with others now.

- Listen
- Use the needs and feelings card
- Ask questions
- Make suggestions if necessary

5) Who else was effected by this behaviour who was not directly involved in the incident?

What do you think their feelings and needs are? This question is about understanding how the behaviour affects people not directly involved with the incident, for example the rest of the class, the teaching staff, the rest of the school, the head teacher and parents. Often the pupil won't have considered how their behaviour has impacted people outside of the incident.

6) What have you learnt and what will you do differently next time?

This is an opportunity to work with the pupil to find strategies moving forwards for them to meet their needs in a way that will also be respectful of other people needs. If there doesn't seem to be an easy solution, for example they are bored in maths and they have rejected all ideas about how they could make it more fun for themselves, revert back to empathy and sympathise with the challenge. The goal with Restorative Practice is to get everyone one step closer to meeting their needs whilst improving communication, understanding and empathy for one another.

- Listen
- Ask questions
- Check understanding
- Summarise

7) How can you repair the damage?

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This step is often missed with 'Punitive Justice' where a pupil might have to do a detention but won't necessarily repair the damage. Giving the responsibility to the pupil to correct their behaviour is arguable far more effective than a punishment for many reasons. The process of apologising to the class, replacing broken equipment, sanding down a defaced desk etc. deters them from doing it again without the need for a punishment, it gives everyone involved a sense of resolution and anyone who was negatively impacted is left feeling touched rather than resentment.

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