

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

1. The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.
2. Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
3. Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
4. Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
5. Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
6. Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
7. Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
8. Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
9. Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
10. Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
11. Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
12. Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
13. Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
14. Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

15. All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
16. Ensure there are adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
17. School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school:-
 - a. Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - b. Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
18. Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

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 ‘mess 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 group. 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, social network sites, email, 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.

Name Calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) that 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.

Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: _____ Class: _____

2. Name(s) and class (es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report -tick relevant box (es)

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil(s)	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents -tick relevant box (es)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour - tick relevant box (es)

Physical aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	

Name calling			
Other (specify)			

7. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

8. Details of actions taken

Signed: _____ *Date* _____
(Relevant Teacher 1)

Signed: _____ *Date* _____
(Relevant Teacher 1)

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____