

## Antibullying policy in Tallinn European School

### 1. Background and basic principles in TES

All European schools have to ensure that pupils have as secure, safe and friendly educational environment as possible. For that reason each school should develop and publish clear policy and procedures to be followed in case of bullying. Also every school should have a programme or strategy to avoid bullying as part of the yearly school activities.

Anti-bullying policy in Tallinn European School is based on the principle of **prevention** meaning that school implements systematic activities to promote a culture of caring and positive interaction in the school community.

**Team effort** is another important principle in the bullying prevention meaning that it is the responsibility of every teacher, school worker, pupil and parent to ensure a safe and peaceful learning environment.

**Systemic intervention** is the third principle in the anti-bullying policy meaning that the school enforces effective tackling of bullying cases coming to the attention of the school. This facilitates the creation of an openly anti-bullying atmosphere in the school.

### 2. Definition of bullying, basic theory

Bullying in school is **systematic aggressive behavior** against a person who finds it difficult to defend him/herself against the perpetrator(s). Repeated nature of attacks and power differential are central features in this definition.

Bullying can take **different forms**: verbal (name calling, mocking), physical (pushing, hitting), indirect acts (spreading rumors, excluding sb.) and cyberbullying.

Rather than consisting of single attacks, bullying represents a rather **stable relationship** further **embedded in the larger peer setting**. Bullying can be a strategy to gain status and power in the peer group and it is often successful.

By choosing victims who are submissive, insecure, physically weak and in a low-power, rejected position in the group, the bullies can repeatedly demonstrate their power and renew their high-status position without being confronted. The power demonstrations need witnesses – in most bullying incidents, a group of peers is present. **Influencing the peer context is therefore an essential part of effective antibullying work.** Students need to become aware of their own role in maintaining bullying, as well as their potential in putting an end to it. Efforts should be made to influence group norms to build capacity in all children to behave in constructive ways, to take responsibility for supporting victims rather than encouraging the bullies.

Universal phenomenon - about 10% of children and adolescents worldwide are systematic victims.

### 3. Preventive actions as a strategy in TES

The ethos of TES is founded on the basis of mutual respect between all members of the school community. Therefore a proactive approach should be taken aiming to prevent problems developing by raising awareness and suggesting strategies that promote a positive, supportive environment.

Action at school level:

1. Special attention is given to the **school climate** so that it reflects respect, tolerance, caring, trust and support. Everyone in the school community should be mindful of their interactions with one another so that this positive behaviour is reflected.

2. To ensure a pleasant and friendly learning atmosphere a **set of school regulations and rules** have been drawn up which are meant to be followed on a daily basis. During recess time students are provided with regular supervision which is supervised by the Deputy Director. A roster is drawn up including all the teachers on a rotational basis.
3. Teachers are provided with **training** to ensure a common understanding of bullying and strategies to respond constructively. If necessary teachers are encouraged to seek expert help from the advisory support group which includes the Director, Deputy Director, school psychologist, therapist and one class teacher each from primary and secondary cycles.
4. All members of the **school community** have the responsibility to act on incidents of bullying behaviour and to intervene when necessary. Bullying cases should be reported to the class teacher of the pupils involved and Deputy Director will record the incidence on the prescribed forms.
5. All **activity focusing on the team spirit and communality** also has a preventive effect on the occurrence of bullying. This kind of work can be carried out by pupil associations, parents' associations, various projects in school and with other partners.

#### Action at classroom level:

1. Each teacher should raise awareness of bullying within their classes so that children understand that **bullying is unacceptable and not to be tolerated**.
2. Victims and bystanders understand that they **should report incidents of bullying** to their peers, teachers or parents. A distinction needs to be made between "telling tales" to get somebody into trouble and seeking help to avoid injury. A mailbox will be set up for anonymous letters of concern from the students.
3. **Bystanders** understand that wherever possible they should help/protect their peers whom they see are being bullied. Influencing the peer context can reduce the rewards gained by the bullies and consequently their motivation to bully in the first place.
4. Various kinds of **class-specific theme events, projects, school trips** are delivered to all students by their classroom teachers and supported by other subject teachers. These activities are designed to improve and promote team spirit in classes and will have beneficial impact on general well-being at school.
5. Students should be provided with **education in personal relations, communication skills, conflict resolution, encouragement of respect and tolerance**. This is done in cooperation with classroom teachers and subject teachers.

#### Action at individual level:

1. Teachers provide **support to bullied pupils**.
2. **Bullies are confronted** for their unacceptable behaviour following a specified strategy. Their behaviour is monitored and parents have to be informed of the instances of bullying.
3. Potential **support pupils are involved** ( for example selected high-status classmates) and challenged to provide support for the victim.

#### 4. Guidelines in case of bullying

The school takes an active stance against bullying by intervening immediately when it is observed. In order to do that it is important to make the distinction between bullying and conflict, fight or misunderstanding. Different procedures are implemented on different cases based on the initial screening.

Guidelines:

**Screening by classroom teacher** - is this a case of systematic bullying or is it a case of conflict or fight?

In case of a fight, misunderstanding or conflict, the classroom teacher is the one who handles the case.

In case of bullying classroom teacher works in collaboration with trained teachers. Classroom teacher fills in the screening form (see in annex 1). Further activities are shared between classroom teacher and trained teachers.

The following procedure is being implemented in case of bullying:

1. **Conversation with the bullied student.** The victims need to feel that they are heard and helped by the adults at school. Ask concrete questions – what, when, where and by whom; who has not been involved (potential supporters for the victim). The conversation has to be documented (see annex 2).
2. Classroom teacher talks to **other support students** from the class who could help the victim.
3. **Individual discussions with the bullies.** The bullies need to be confronted for their unacceptable behavior. These conversations should come as a surprise and not to be known in advance. Conversations are documented (annex 3).
4. **Group discussion with the pupils who have taken part in bullying.** They have to commit to changing their behaviour. They are being told that their behaviour is being monitored and the follow-up meeting shall take place later. Conversation is documented (annex 4).
5. To ensure that bullying will not continue, the staff arranges **the follow-up discussions** separately with the victim (has the situation changed) and the pupils who have taken part in bullying (how can we make sure that there will be no more bullying). If the victim is willing to participate in the discussion with the bullies, the joint discussion is held. Again the discussion is documented (annex 5).

Parents are provided the information about bullying incidence after the preliminary discussions. They are assured that the case is being handled professionally and delicately. Also they are being informed that parents do not deal directly themselves with bullying issues at school, but follow the agreed procedures.