

UNIT THREE

Care for vulnerable learners

Tool 8: What should be included in an Anti-Bullying Policy?

There are different ways of combating discrimination and creating a safe and non-threatening environment at school. An important contribution can be made by implementing an Anti-Bullying Policy. Such a document provides learners, teachers, parents and school management a clear description of:

- What bullying is and how it affects victims
- What types of behaviour are considered bullying
- What the school's approach is to bullying.

Here is an example of an Anti-Bullying Policy. You can use this resource to inform your discussions and development of an Anti-Bullying Policy in your school.



If your school already has an Anti-Bullying Policy, you may still want to check yours against this exemplar to effect revisions if necessary.

EXEMPLAR: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

DEFINITIONS

1. Bullying is a social problem and instances of bullying occur in all areas of human endeavour involving interpersonal relationships.
2. It is any action, physical, verbal or psychological, which diminishes the dignity of another.
3. It involves the use of power aimed at humiliating or diminishing the dignity of another.
4. This policy is aimed at addressing bullying that occurs among learners.

TYPES OF BULLYING

5. Physical: Inflicting physical pain of any form. Taking, using or damaging any article belonging to another without permission, or any physical action which may diminish the dignity of another.
6. Verbal: Diminishing the dignity of another using verbal attacks such as threats, teasing, mockery, "dissing", racial slurs and hate-speech, foul language, and name-calling.
7. Psychological: Intimidation, rumour-mongering, ostracizing, manipulation and domination. The use of body language, writing hurtful or damaging things about another or any other action which psychologically diminishes the dignity of another. Engage in ongoing discussions with the learners representative council to combat bullying among learners.

THE APPROACH TO BULLYING AT THE COLLEGE

8. All learners have certain rights and responsibilities:
 - The right to human dignity and the responsibility to respect the dignity of others.
 - The right to a safe learning environment and the responsibility to ensure that their behaviour respects the rights of other learners to safe learning environment.
 - The right to an education and the responsibility to allow uninterrupted learning to take place.
 - The right to be respected by other learners and the responsibility to show respect for other learners.
 - The right to be valued as individuals and the responsibility to value other learners as individuals.

9. The College is, therefore, opposed to any form of behaviour exhibited by any learner which puts another learner's basic rights in jeopardy and which constitutes any form of bullying.

10. As bullying is a social problem, the College will educate learners in their rights and responsibilities to fellow learners. The College will:
 - Make learners aware of the existence of bullying and of its detrimental effect on individuals and the community.
 - Use mentoring and counselling in an effort to modify negative behaviour that leads to bullying.
 - Run Assertiveness Training Workshops to help learners to stand up to bullies in their peer group, to understand why some are bullied and others bully.
 - Engage in ongoing discussions with the learners representative council to combat bullying among learners.
 - Deal severely with persistent bullying if the above does not impact positively on behaviour.

PROCEDURES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

11. Bullying behaviour needs to be identified and addressed pro-actively. This may include providing counseling for the bully which will be coupled with a warning of the consequences of a repetition of bullying behaviour. Behaviour will be reported to parents.
12. If behaviour is repeated, a parental interview will be held and strategies for intervention and behaviour modification will be outlined. Professional counseling, regular report-backs and appositive improvement in behaviour is expected.
13. If there is a repetition of bullying behaviour, learners must be aware that it is considered an action of serious misconduct according to the School Rules and will be dealt with accordingly. This may include suspension or expulsion from the College.

Adopted by the School Governing Board

Date: _____

(Source: Picas, R. (undated) *Educate with Mind and Heart*, Sacred Heart College: Johannesburg Appendix 4 page 49).

Tool 9: Collecting basic information about vulnerable learners

While working through the first seven units of this guide, principals and SMT members are required to apply their thinking to the problem of how best to support and care for vulnerable learners. Using the information gathered during the process of working through this Guide and using the tools provided in the Toolkit, Unit 8 culminates in a process of developing a care and support plan for vulnerable learners.

One of the focus areas in Unit 8 is around the importance of establishing a simple data management system to inform the planning process. As data management will be covered more fully in Unit 8, Tool 9 merely deals with some very basic issues around the need to start quantifying the number of vulnerable learners in order to start to thinking realistically about the kinds of support strategies that are necessary.

At various points in the year principals are required to submit information which focuses on the learners enrolled at the school, the teachers, and the school infrastructure, amongst others, to the provincial departments of education. Why does the department need this information? What do they do with it? The purpose all this data collection is to inform planning and to provide a basis for decisions about the nature of support to be provided to schools.

The information you send to the department is a valuable resource for you as well. You can use it to inform *your* plans to manage key aspects of care and support in your school. As you already have to collect information about the learners in your school, why not build on this existing process and identify how many vulnerable learners you have in your school?

Purpose of gathering information about vulnerable learners

Reliable information about the number of vulnerable learners can be used to inform your plans for identifying and managing the right kind of support.

A Simple system for managing information about vulnerable learners comprises three main processes:

1. Data collection, capture and collation
2. Data analysis and use
3. Tracking and updating

1. Data collection, capture and collation

The primary source of data for vulnerable learners is the information that is obtained by the class teacher. The class teacher is required to collect and capture learner data – learner attendance, learner behaviour, learner performance etc. Once data has been collected and captured, it needs to be collated.

As class teachers may be dealing with a large number of learners, the aim is to obtain basic information on all learners in the class concerning attendance, performance and teacher observations, without the time consuming task of delving into details.

For each learner, the teacher will then be required to look at specific attendance patterns, any noticeable change in academic performance, and any concerning personal observations.

Teachers will need to include any specific performance related problems (such as dyslexia), which may account for a decline in performance that is not relevant to the focus of the vulnerable learners information system. In other words, this is a system about vulnerable learners, and learners with special learning needs should not be considered unless there are other mitigating factors such as socio-economic problems.

Here is an overview of the kind of data that teachers should be responsible for collecting.



Collecting data on Vulnerable Children			
Indicator	Data to be collected	How (methods and procedures)	Who is responsible?
Description of needs	Description of specific needs, e.g. nutrition, clothing, after care support, academic support, counseling, health support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations by teachers • Interviews with parents or caregivers where possible • Initial needs assessment questionnaire completed by teachers after consultation with parents or caregivers 	Class teachers
Learner attendance	Attendance data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of attendance records 	Class teachers
Learner performance	Marks on assessment activities Behaviour during class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of assessment marks • Teacher observation of behaviour during class 	Class teachers

2. Data analysis and use

Class teachers submit their information on all learners who have been identified as possible vulnerable learners to school managers for further action to be taken. School managers are responsible for analysing relevant school records and information submitted by class teachers in order to:

- Confirm the list of vulnerable children and what their basic needs and support requirements are.
- Contact parents and other relevant people (e.g. home visit) in order to obtain further information on the learners
- Compile a plan of care and support that meets the identified needs of vulnerable children in the school.

3. Tracking and updating

Monitoring and tracking allows school management to:

- Ensure that the list has the most up to date number of vulnerable children;
- Ensure that the list reflects the most up to date support requirements (categories) for each learner based on support they received to date; and
- Provide a greater understanding of the support still required, which will assist school managers in developing strategies for their learners in need.

There should be regular reviews and updates of the information. Annual reviews of the system itself should also be scheduled as part of the monitoring and updating process.

Notes
