

ISR Anti-Bullying Policy (Modified for Parents)



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(Abbreviated version for parents – full version is available from the office.)

International School Rheintal Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

International School Rheintal expects all members of the school community to treat each other with courtesy and respect. Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure, whether at school or elsewhere, and to be protected when vulnerable, so that all may flourish without fear or unfair treatment or harassment.

Bullying affects everyone, not just the victim and the bullies. It affects children who may witness violence and aggression and distress of the victim. It damages the atmosphere of the school. It can cause lasting psychological damage to a victim and in extreme cases, lead to suicide. All complaints should be taken seriously and pursued. Acting against bullying is a part of every teacher's duty of care and that of all the members of the school community.

The school's policy on bullying is unequivocal: it is always unacceptable. If bullying does occur the victim should be able to tell someone and know that the incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is hurtful behavior that usually occurs over a period of time. It is the **repetitive, intentional hurting** of one person or group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.

Bullying behavior can be:

Physical – hitting, kicking, “play-fighting” (which may not be “play” for one of those involved); and hiding, taking or damaging belongings.

Verbal – aggressive name calling, teasing, mockery, insults. It is important to consider the effects that the name calling has upon the victim, rather than simply the actual words used which may seem to others to be harmless.

Emotional – being deliberately unfriendly, excluding someone from a group, activity or place, tormenting, spreading rumours, inciting others to do the same.

Racist – physical, verbal or emotional abuse against a person or group because of colour or ethnicity.

Religious / cultural – physical, verbal or emotional abuse against a person or group because of religious beliefs or cultural issues.

Sexual or sexist bullying – making inappropriate comments about appearance and attractiveness, uninvited propositions, uninvited touching and using innuendo or inappropriate imagery.

For reasons related to sexual orientation – physical, verbal or emotional abuse against a person or group because of actual or perceived sexual orientation.

For reasons related to special educational needs or disability – physical, verbal or emotional abuse against a person or group because of learning difficulties or other disabilities.

Cyberbullying – the use of information and communications technology, particularly mobile phones, email, social websites, text messages, cameras and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. Cyberbullying can take place outside of the normal school day and be directed towards the victim while he or she is at home. Silent phone calls or abusive texts or emails can be just as distressing as being bullied face to face. Cyber bullying can have a profound effect on a child as the technology allows information (or misinformation) to be distributed widely, instantly and directly to the child's home or mobile device. The victim can feel that there is nowhere available for him to escape from the bullying. ISR will take action against any student responsible for using electronic devices to bully another student even if the bullying is taking place outside of the grounds of the school.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- does not want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school

- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

1. The message that bullying should be reported must be strongly communicated to students.
2. Any cases should be reported without delay to the Director, Homeroom Teacher, Coordinator and Counselor before any action is taken.
3. During the initial report, while any child who is prepared to report bullying must be offered support and protection, staff must under no circumstances promise confidentiality – any action taken will necessarily involve others.

4. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated jointly by the above mentioned and appropriate action taken quickly.
5. If bullying is judged to have taken place, the parents (of both parties) will be informed and may be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
6. The incident will be recorded in the behavior form which includes the actions taken in order to monitor the behavior.
7. All staff members will be informed about the bullying incident to keep an eye on the student in the class and in the playground.
8. In conjunction with this, an attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour through restorative approaches such as counselling and behavior support.
7. Parents should be encouraged to report any suspicions/incidents of bullying to the school at the earliest opportunity.
8. For particularly serious cases of bullying where a child continues to bully the victim, the advice and help of the Kinderschutzzentrum and Jugendpolizei will be sought.
9. In extreme cases and if deemed necessary because of safety issues, the bully will be asked to leave the school.

Prevention

As previously stated, prevention is the most important tool in combating bullying. The following strategies, which are both proactive and supportive, will be used.

- Staff will lead by example in modelling behaviour
- We will use curriculum opportunities to underpin the message
- The school will take part in the Anti-Bullying Week
- This topic will be discussed in assemblies
- Lessons dealing specifically with Internet safety will be part of the ICT curriculum.
- We will establish restorative approaches such as counselling and behavior support for the bully.

- Teachers on duty in the playground and students' lounge will take care to be always alert for incidents, and step in before they develop.
- We will encourage parental involvement in making sure that students always feel able to talk to someone about bullying.
- In lessons, assemblies and homeroom times, we will incorporate the values and principles of:
 - Kindness and thoughtfulness
 - Rights of the individual
 - Tolerance and respect of differences and diversity
 - Social responsibility
 - Appropriate reporting of rule-breaking, i.e. when telling is appropriate
 - The difference between good and bad secrets
 - Assertiveness
 - Positive relationships