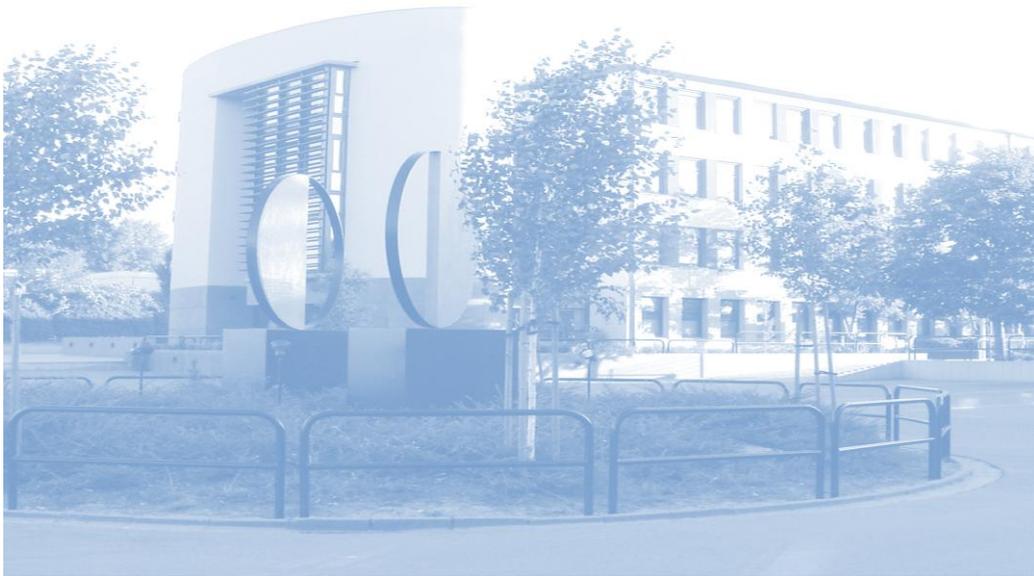




ANTI-BULLYING POLICY



European School Brussels II

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Any form of bullying, whether verbal, physical or psychological, is completely unacceptable in our school.

This policy document aims to clarify to pupils, staff and parents the school's attitude to bullying and the action which will be taken to prevent it happening as well as the response should it occur.

We aim to ensure that:

- each individual is treated with consideration and respect at all times.
- all individuals and groups are aware that they must not exploit or cause unhappiness to others.
- staff are aware of the ways that bullying can happen, and of the strategies for preventing, and dealing with it should it arise.
- that opportunities exist for pupils to express their worries, and for them to be aware of the support available.
- that although each situation is unique and should be dealt with appropriately, staff, pupils and parents feel confident that a consistent approach will be taken, and that concerns will always be treated seriously and sensitively.

1.1 Definition of bullying

Bullying may be defined as: Behavior by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Specific types of bullying include: bullying related to race, religion or culture; bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; bullying related to appearance or health conditions, bullying related to sexual orientation; bullying related to home circumstances; sexist or sexual bullying.

Bullying can take place within a class setting, across sections, between different age-groups within the school and also between teachers and pupils.

Bullying can include name-calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, punching, pushing, taking or hiding belongings, inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups; spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours.

1.2 Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying can be defined as: The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.

Cyber-bullying can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying:

- the invasion of home and personal space
- the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages
- the size of the audience
- perceived anonymity
- the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target

Cyber-bullying is a specific form of bullying which is increasing in prevalence and is unique in its potential to involve staff as well as pupils, in being bullied as individuals. It is also unique in that acts of cyber-bullying whilst not a specific criminal offence, may involve the breaking of Belgian laws regarding harassment and threatening communications. Dealing with acts of cyber-bullying could therefore involve the police. It is for these reasons that we are giving particular attention to this type of bullying in the school policy.

Forms which cyber-bullying may take

- threats and intimidation
- harassment or cyber-stalking
- vilification/defamation
- exclusion or peer rejection
- impersonation
- unauthorized publication of private information or images
- manipulation or grooming

It is important to recognize that not all apparent cases of cyber-bullying are deliberate or aggressive, but may be the result of unthinking acts in which images or comments are shared in the belief that they are amusing without any realization of the distress caused. These instances are to be treated seriously but not necessarily with the same severity as obviously intentional acts of cyber-bullying.

2.1 The consequences of bullying

Bullying can seriously damage a young person's confidence and sense of self-worth, and they will often feel that that they are at fault in some way. It can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage for an individual, and, at its most extreme, suicide. Those who conduct

the bullying or witness the bullying can also experience emotional harm, and the impact on parents and school staff and the atmosphere in the school can be significant.

It is the school's view that all members of the community have a responsibility to ensure that bullying does not happen; pupils who stand by and do not report this kind of behavior are in fact complying with it. We aim to create an atmosphere of openness and trust, where concerns can be raised at an early stage and dealt with swiftly.

The school approaches the issues through:

- **Education**
- **Counseling, Pastoral Support and Psychological Care**
- **Disciplinary action**

3.1 Education

In this area, as in others, pupils should learn by example. They should experience the adults in the school behaving in a civilized, kindly way towards them and towards each other at all times.

The school also deals with the subject of bullying in a series of lessons given throughout the year, by various teachers and during various subject courses. Class teachers are encouraged, where appropriate to address the subject with their class. Cyber-bullying and its effects will be included in the education and discussions in class. At all times the education delivered will be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

Pupils will regularly be reminded of the sources available to help and advise them.

Staff will make a point of building up student's confidence and self-esteem by recognizing the achievements and positive qualities of every individual. They will adopt strategies to ensure that every pupil is properly involved in lessons and group activities. They will make a point of expressing disapproval of unkind remarks. They will not allow pupils to exclude others from groups in class.

During social activities or school trips, staff will keep a careful eye on behavior and relationships within groups.

Staff will be vigilant for possible signs of bullying, which might include for example:

- (on the part of the target) physical distress, tearfulness, withdrawal from group activities, isolation.
- (on the part of the perpetrator/s) exclusion of others in class and social activities. Passing comments – even if in form of a joke, obvious silence in the presence of victims.

- Being obviously upset after receiving a text message
- Being unwilling to use computers or specific sites of prior interest
- Being unwilling to discuss their mobile phones or internet use

3.2 Counselling, Pastoral Support and Psychological Care

The school counselling service and school psychologist are always available to support and listen to anyone who may wish to report a case of bullying. Students should also feel free to speak to their year counselor (Conseiller), their class teacher or any other trusted member of staff.

If a pupil complains of being bullied, they will be taken seriously. He/she will be listened to and any specific incidents will be noted in writing.

In the case of cyber-bullying the pupil will be encouraged to keep any evidence and provide it to staff. Evidence may take the form of:

- Text messages saved on the recipient's phone
- Posts on social networking sites
- Websites created about an individual or in an individual's name
- Threads on discussion boards

Often the initial concern will be raised by a parent. The same process will apply in this case. The member of staff contacted will arrange to report back on progress within a specified time.

3.2.1 Action

The pupil concerned will always be informed about any action taken. Pupils may often be reluctant to support further action for fear of making the situation worse and staff will take note of these fears. They will respect the pupil's desire for confidentiality as far as possible; equally, they have a duty to the school community as a whole to take action on bullying and cannot stand by and allow it to continue once they are aware that it is happening. They will make clear to the student concerned that the school cannot condone bullying and he/she will be reassured that they will be supported through any continuing difficulties.

3.2.2 Investigation

The staff member concerned will investigate the situation carefully. Any evidence in the form of text messages or emails or notes passed to pupils will be retained. In the case of cyber-bullying in particular, hard copies of emails or transcripts, images sent should be made. In the event of images being of an explicit/obscene nature, the advice of the local Social Services may be sought.

If pupils are accused of sending upsetting texts, which the recipient has deleted, staff may ask to look at the perpetrator's phone for evidence if there is reasonable suspicion that such texts have been sent. Staff may not however, search a phone for information without the specific permission of the owner. In line with school policy however, mobile phones may be confiscated from pupils if they are causing a disturbance or if there is reasonable suspicion of use for the purpose of cyber-bullying.

Staff should at all times be sensitive to the feelings of the bullied individual, who may find the evidence retrieved upsetting or embarrassing. Pupils should be assured of discretion in dealing with such material as part of the upsetting nature of cyber-bullying is the perception that 'everyone' is aware of such images or texts.

Any evidence of cyber-bullying which has been generated in the above manner will, upon resolution of the incident, be placed in an envelope marked 'confidential' in the pupil's file.

Investigation may take a number of forms, depending, for example on the apparent seriousness of the situation, the age of the pupils concerned and the level of distress involved. The "bully" or "bullies" will be talked to separately, initially, perhaps with others who are not directly involved. It may be useful, if a group is involved to ask them to write individual versions of events which can then be checked against each other; a meeting between "bully" and "target" may be arranged, where a member of staff encourages an exchange of views, while making it clear that bullying behavior is unacceptable. Such a meeting would only be arranged with the agreement of both parties and care would be taken to ensure that support is given if necessary.

Staff will consider carefully whether another member of staff should be present to take notes and whether individual pupils should be supported by a friend or another adult. This will be automatic in serious cases.

3.2.3 Responses

There are a number of options, depending on the seriousness of the situation, and the certainty with which responsibility can be attributed.

At the lowest level the aim will be to resolve the situation and re-establish reasonable relationships and acceptable behavior as quickly as possible. Staff will make clear that any evidence of bullying in the future will result in disciplinary action.

Staff will then discuss the future with both sides and establish agreed ground-rules about any specific issues which may have arisen. A number of follow-up meetings may be arranged so that developments can be monitored. Class teachers and year counselors will be informed so that they can monitor the situation closely at all times.

If this process is not successful, and there is no obvious responsibility for continuing problems, other options such as a change of class may be considered in order to encourage pupils to make a fresh start.

It is sometimes the case that the “target”, while not responsible for his/her treatment by others, can be shown how to modify their behavior in ways so as to avoid further conflict. Counselling or life-skills coaching may be helpful for some individuals concerned (both target and bully). This may be suggested.

In the case of cyber-bullying, the following may also occur:

- The perpetrator will be asked to remove the upsetting post(s) from websites and/or asked to delete photographs or texts which have been used to upset others.
- The service provider or host may be contacted to request that material is removed
- The nuisance call department of the victim’s mobile phone provider may be contacted to block certain numbers.
- Certain email addresses may be blocked from reaching the victim and the victim may be educated on how to block certain individuals from accessing their pages or social networking sites.
- In more serious cases, internet usage inside school may be suspended for a period of time.
- School may decide that parents will be made aware of the content of texts or posts as part of the disciplinary process.
- School reserves the right to seek legal advice and to contact the Social Services or Police as necessary.

Staff will consider carefully at what stage parents should be informed, if they are not already aware of what is happening. Some complaints of ‘bullying’ are the result of normal (albeit distressing) changes in friendships. These are best dealt with in a low-key way, as part of the everyday running of school. Parents will not automatically be informed in such cases.

Parents of all pupils involved will be informed if a situation continues or becomes serious, or if it is established that behavior which constitutes bullying has taken place.

In a case where a pupil believes that they are being bullied by a member of staff, they should report this directly to the school management who will investigate the allegations and will endeavor to resolve the situation.

3.3 Discipline

On the rare occasions where it is clear that serious bullying has taken place, and there is evidence that a particular individual or group bears responsibility, the following disciplinary

measures may be taken, as appropriate, in addition to, or instead of, some of the responses outlined above:

- Formal, written warning, with copy to parents
- Pupil placed on contract
- Conseil de discipline
- Suspension
- Permanent exclusion

4.1 Cyber-bullying and Staff

One of the characteristics of cyber-bullying is that it has the potential, by its anonymity to affect staff. The perpetrator may not be older or in a position of authority in order to bully the individual. Staff therefore have a responsibility to protect themselves from cyber-bullying as far as possible and a right to support from school should an incidence of bullying become apparent.

The following guidance may be helpful:

- Staff should seek permission before sharing images of pupils online
- Significant information should not be attached to any images posted, such as full names, unless informed or parental consent has been obtained in advance
- Any picture which causes distress to an individual, for any reason, should be removed straight away.

Staff should also be mindful about how they present themselves on the internet, particularly in relation to images and personal information. Staff should not befriend current pupils on social networking sites, and should be aware if befriending ex-pupils of the relationships which may exist between current and ex-pupils and how this may potentially allow current pupils access to personal information.

If a member of staff believes that they are being cyber-bullied, they should take the following steps:

- Staff should never retaliate. They should report incidents appropriately and seek support from a senior member of staff.
- Keep any records of the abuse – text, emails, voicemail, website pages etc. Take screen prints of messages and carefully record the time, date and address of the site.
- Staff are advised that if they receive a message with an attachment which they believe to contain offensive or obscene content, they should not open the attachment but alert a senior member of staff.

- Where the perpetrator is known to be pupil or co-worker, the majority of cases will be dealt with by the school's own disciplinary procedures, with the involvement of other agencies in severe cases.
- There have been cases where pupils have made unfounded, malicious claims against staff members. It is critical to take every claim seriously and investigate it thoroughly. In cases where an allegation is made that an employee has behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child in an inappropriate way, then that allegation should be reported to the School Head immediately. This will then be investigated.