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The Gwendoline van Putten School Anti- Bullying Protocol

Preface

One of the premises of the Gwendoline van Putten school in Sint Eustatius is that students can 'learn and feel comfortable and safe at school'. The GVP has a zero-tolerance attitude to bullying and clearly states that the school is a place where students are seen, challenged and heard; where students can discover and develop their passion and talent; where there is room to deal with differences between people and their cultures and where difficult questions are not avoided.

Our teachers, support staff, mentors and the school board foster this development by creating an open and pleasant working atmosphere in the classroom and beyond. By creating an overview and making this visible, the organization of the school contributes to the feeling of safety and security. There is room for everyone to be true to themselves as long as it does not conflict with the expectations of the school or exceeds personal boundaries. Thus, it should be possible for every student to feel appreciated.

This anti-bullying protocol is written for students, parents and school staff and it represents the school's policy with regards to bullying. It is part of the School Security Policy and as such is connected with other policies, such as policies on suspension and expulsion of students and the policy on unacceptable behavior (aggression, sexual harassment and violence).

The protocol describes bullying, how bullying can be prevented and how to approach the situation when bullying occurs. The main purpose of the protocol is to prevent and confront bullying, by giving all stakeholders clarity on their role. It also has a purpose of providing information and has a referral function (meaning which actions the school takes after a bullying complaint has been received).

The main purpose of this protocol is:

The meaning and consequences of bullying

The GVP school rule that prohibits bullying

The measures to be taken

To create a sense of security in students

To emphasize that respect for each other is a very valuable the role of the GVP staff/parents with regards to handling bullying

How do we define bullying and in what ways does it distinguish from teasing :

We talk about **teasing** when the effects of one's behavior are not pleasant for others, but can still be seen as a game that is not experienced as threatening by any of the parties involved. Teasing is a playful way of dealing with a "conflict" and has no adverse consequences for the person undergoing it. As a result, students develop a skill that could be useful in life when it comes to conflict management.

Bullying, however, is defined as the repeated violation use by one or more students or by a member of the school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed towards a specific target.

The key points of this definition that distinguish bullying from teasing are the following:

- Bullying is done systematically ,repeatedly and deliberately.
- There is a difference in the display of power between the bully and the bullied.
- Bullying could have serious consequences for the bullied.
- The bullied usually has problems with standing up for him/herself

1. Forms of bullying

Bullying can take the same forms as teasing. The following five categories are examples of bullying that we identify in school. At the GVP school we take measures against all forms of bullying.

Verbal bullying

This includes: verbal abuse, threatening, ridiculing, sending unsolicited messages via email or chat, using an app or website with the intention of making someone look bad by sending comments, photos and/or videos, deriding or giving nicknames based on physical characteristics, (ethnic) origin, religion, sexual preference or giving a wrong answer in class.

Physical bullying

This includes: pulling, pushing, spitting, kicking, hitting, tripping, scratching, biting, or pulling one's hair.

Intimidation, Examples: following/stalking a student or awaiting someone, setting up a trap, sexual harassment, obstructing passage or forcing someone to give them money or other properties.

Isolation

For example: excluding a classmate constantly by making it clear that he or she is not wanted, or silencing that student.

Stealing or destruction of property

For example: stealing, damaging and destroying property.

Cyber bullying

For example: targeting students online via social media or otherwise

2. Parties involved in bullying

When bullying occurs, different parties are involved: the bullied student(s), the bullying student(s), the silent middle class, the staff and the parents.

To tackle bullying, both in terms of prevention and in curative form, it is necessary that all parties are involved in the implementation of the policy. We employ a five-pronged approach.

The bullied student

Students who are bullied tend to have different interests than most of their peers, or they do things differently. They mostly have a limited resilience and are unable to actually take action against bullying and emit this. They are often anxious and insecure in a group and are afraid to say anything because they are afraid of being rejected. This fear and uncertainty are further enhanced by the experienced bullying, causing the bullied student to enter a vicious circle, which can only be broken with external help. Bullied students often feel lonely, don't have many friends to fall back on in the environment in which they are being bullied and may sometimes get along better with adults than with their peers.`

The bullying student

Students that bully are often physically and/or verbally stronger than the bullied student. Girls mostly (75%) bully through psychological violence (exclusion, gossip) and by means of physical violence (25%).

For boys it's the opposite: 75% uses physical violence, while the remainder is being done through psychological violence. Bullying students position themselves in an aggressive manner and react with threats of violence or indirect use of force. They often seem to be popular in a classroom, but force their popularity on the group by showing how strong and daring they are. Aggressive bullying pupils are not only physically stronger than their peers, they also often have a poorly developed sense of empathy, are impulsive and prefer to dominate other children. A bullying student has not learned how to express his or her aggression/anger in any other way than by bullying. They sometimes have been bullied themselves in the past. Bullying students often experience a sense of guilt in the long term, which can burden them. Because of their limited social skills they often struggle to build and maintain friendships based on other grounds than those of power and sharing that power. Bullying students often lack social development, which has consequences for themselves and others.

The middle group

The so-called 'silent middle' involves the students that do not actively participate in or resist bullying. They keep some distance. The 'followers' do participate in bullying, either out of fear or out of fear of reckoning at a later stage. A follower's greatest fear is to become a victim him/herself. Sometimes the followers think that bullying can make them look tough and could possibly contribute to his or

her popularity. Bullying is often supported by the followers, because this behavior increases the attention they are getting. Without followers, bullying would probably quickly diminish or stop altogether. Very occasionally, a student or a small group of students might dare to stand up against the bully(s). The middle group plays an important role in solving bullying problems.

The staff members

Bullying often happens in a closely-guarded secret group: students know that others are being bullied; yet nobody dares to tell a teacher or parent. The staff members therefore are often unaware that students are being bullied. When seeing inappropriate behavior, they do not always interpret it as bullying. Staff members should (in doubt) always address students' behavior.

The parents

When students are bullied, they tend not to tell their parents. They fear involving parents and mentors will lead to the problem being addressed in the wrong way, making things worse. They often feel ashamed or believe that they have provoked the bullying somehow and deserve it.

3. The effects of bullying

The effects of bullying can be mayor. Students who are victims of bullying can be very unhappy, scared and suffer from reduced self-confidence. The bullied may also suffer from a low self-esteem, retreat and feelings of loneliness. They are afraid to stand up for themselves and they sometimes feel responsible for the fact that they are being bullied. Their attitude changes over time, they become skittish, overly stressed, anxious and physically stiff and clumsy.

Recognizing signs of bullying

Early recognition of the signs of bullying in your school/classroom is essential. Students tend not to speak about who all are being bullied within the classroom setting. While some may know that bullying is taking place, nobody dares to tell the teacher out of fear to be considered a snitch. Parents also often do not have a clue of the fact that their son/daughter is a victim of bullying. Even when they do, they are at loss about how to handle the situation for their child to feel comfortable in school. Parents therefore often do not interfere or bring the matter to the attention of the teacher/mentor. For this reason it is important to agree with both students and parents that telling someone about bullying is never

wrong. It is pivotal information for the school to be informed of the matter. Students need to be made aware that they can talk to the teacher/mentor safely. They need to know that they are heard. Parents need to realize that the act of bullying will not be tolerated by the school and that it is therefore pivotal to have a good cooperation between parents and teachers/school staff. The members of the school staff have to always remain alert to signs of bullying in school. Teachers/ school staff members should pay attention to the following signs with regards to their students:

- Students standing by themselves during breaks.
- Students who seek regular contact with their teacher.
- Students who remain in the classroom, refusing to tread the school premises during breaks.
- Students with hardly any friends in school.
- Students who continuously receive unpleasant remarks from others in the group.
- Students who are the target of gossip within the group.
- Students who are treated as outcast in a group.
- Students who are ridiculed by their classmates.
- Students who skip classes.
- Students who do not partake in any extracurricular activity organized by the school.
- Students who are continuously absent or report ill.

Parents should pay attention to the following signs in their son/daughter's behavior:

- When your son/daughter starts to dislike school.
- When your son/daughter is withdrawn.
- When your son/daughter is having mood swings that you aren't familiar with.
- When your son /daughter is never invited to class parties or other school events.
- When your son/daughter's behavior changes to the worst.
- When your son/daughter shows signs of aggression/uncontrollable anger.
- When your son/daughter reacts very emotional on simple matter.
- When your son/daughter's academic performance is negatively affected.
- When your son/daughter displays strange behavior etc.

After the introduction to bullying, more time will be devoted to the social climate during the weekly mentor lessons, by including class discussions and joint assignments. During the mentor classes, there is also room for individual conversations with the mentor, for example, if a student wants to talk about bullying or wants to express his concerns about a classmate. Apart from the introduction day and the mentor lessons, the school provides support for confidence building and team-building skills through external organizations.

Teachers and support staff

The exemplary behavior of teachers and staff is very important. Bullying is less likely to occur in a climate with clear rules about communication and interaction, where acceptance of differences is encouraged and where arguments can be settled. This exemplary behavior is founded in upholding the rules of conduct and school policies. Staff and teachers should have a joint approach regarding the code of conduct. All employees are expected to intervene if they notice any untoward behavior in and around the school premises.

Policy published

The anti-bullying policy should be available to pupils, parents and staff, by referring to it in the school and publishing it on the school website. It should be regularly evaluated and adjusted, when necessary.

Staff will get training opportunities regarding bullying.

4. Bullying Prevention

The Preventive Approach

From the beginning of the school year, the mentor has a big responsibility in creating a safe class environment, starting from the introduction day in August. On this particular day there is an extensive program with a strong emphasis on learning how to properly interact, with the introductory activities in which the students get to know each other as a pivotal activity. By formulating questions about awareness, classes will get clarity on how to interact with each other. Questions like "What are the rules of engagement that we all agree to?" These rules will be written down, signed by all the students and made visible in the classroom. In addition, the rules for interaction, as described in the school guide, will be discussed again, so these are clear for everyone.

Examples of rules on interaction:

- We listen to each other.
- We let each other speak.
- We respect each other's personal boundaries.
- We do not touch each other's stuff.
- We exclude no one.
- We solve disputes by talking to each other about what is important to us.
- We notify the teacher or mentor when someone is being bullied.
- Be yourself and give others the room to stay true to themselves.
- When something is unpleasant we will tell someone in a correct, constructive way.

The Curative approach

It is important to take the student who is being bullied seriously and to provide a listening ear. The mentor is always the first point of contact for students and parents. The mentor takes a clear stand against bullying and advises on how to respond. The mentor gives the student who is bullied a clear indication, making sure the student knows that the problem is taken seriously and will involve people from inside (and outside) the school if necessary (mentors, teachers, the caretaker and the anti-bullying coordinator). The mentor engages the student who is being bullied in the process to the extent that the bullied student actively gets involved in solving the issue with the help of the mentor.

5. Disciplinary actions taken by the school as response to bullying

Whenever a student or groups of students is/are targeted as a result of bullying the following actions should be taken:

1. The student(s) should immediately report the matter to the teacher/mentor.
2. The teacher/mentor/ investigates the situation.
3. The mentor/department head/ anti bullying coordinator talks to both the bully(ies) and the bullied and guide them in the process of resolving the problem(s) together and in an amicable way.
4. If in case the class is involved a conversation should follow with the class and agreements on how to treat each other in and out of school are reinforced by the /mentor/department head/anti bullying coordinator . At this stage the **No-Blame Approach can be used**. The No-Blame approach is a method where no one gets punished, but an appeal is made to the positive power of a group to solve the

situation, making the approach to the problem a shared responsibility of the group. The group consists of a friend of the target, the bully, a follower and two or three people in the middle group.

5. The mentor informs parents.

6. The mentor registers incident in the Magister.

If the bullying continues and becomes extreme the following plan of action should go into effect:

7. The anti-bullying coordinator/care team and dept. head develop a plan of approach

8. Mentor informs and invites parents to further discuss the plan of approach with regards to the topic.

9. The mentor/care team/dept. head/ anti bullying coordinator meets with the Bully(ies) and the parent(s).

10. The Bully(ies) receive an Anti- Bullying assignment that needs to be worked on during afterschool hours(3:00 -4:00 pm)and needs to be completed within 4 to 8 days. Student(s) do a presentation of the finding(s) at the end of the 1 or 2 week(s).

11.The anti bullting coordinator/dept. head/care team set up an emergency plan to deal with the Bully(ies).

12. The Bully(ies) is/are immediately isolated from the group and internally suspended.

13. The parent(s) are notified and invited to meet asap.

14. Student receives a behavior sheet and remains in internal suspension for a period of time.

15. The student's behavior is closely monitored.

16. An evaluation of the student's behavior is held periodically.

17. The student returns to the group after a satisfactory report.

18. The incident and plan of approach must be registered in the Magister.

In extreme/more serious reported cases of repeated act of bullying the following actions need to be taken immediately:

19. The student is immediately suspended externally after informing the parents

20. The mentor/dept. head/care team/ anti bullying coordinator develop a plan of action.

21. A meeting is held with external organization(s) for assistance.

22. A meeting is held with student and parent about the action plan.

23. Student follows a mandatory Social Skills Training program.

24. Student's progress is evaluated periodically.

25. Incident and progress report are registered in Magister.

6. Final notes:

In the Social Skill's Training program attention should be given to finding out the possible cause of the bullying behavior. The student who bullies should be provided with the opportunity to atone and the right to learn and make amends for his/her behavior. To further develop the sense of empathy of the bully. The bully can get outside expertise, to further assist his or her behavioral change.

Teachers and support staff

All employees of the school have to act as an example for the students. They must intervene when they receive signals that seem to point in the direction of bullying and inform the mentor, who subsequently goes through the described steps. Employees may be asked to pay extra attention in order to find out which students are targets of bullying.

The parents of both the bullied student and the student who is bullying should be supportive. It is important that the parents of the students that are involved are aware of their child's behavior and take it seriously. They should be involved addressing bullying as described above. Parents should be informed about the anti-bullying policy. This can be done through the school prospectus and the website of the school. The mentor can refer to the protocol. Parents should be given information and advice about bullying and ways to tackle bullying.

Policy published

The anti-bullying policy should be available to pupils, parents and staff, by referring to it in the school and publishing it on the school website. It should be regularly evaluated and adjusted, when necessary. The GVP Staff will get training opportunities regarding bullying and details of the school's policy on prevention of bullying .

