

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

For school year 2018-2019
Date of approval: 20.08.2018

1. Rationale

In Avenor we promote building and maintaining harmonious relationships between children and thus any attempt to intimidate, harass or discriminate will be addressed with a maximum of involvement and seriousness by all staff members.

In the Avenor community, all staff members, parents and students have a sound understanding of the effects of intimidation, harassment and discrimination in relation with an individual, as well as in connection with the extended social environment, and therefore will collaborate to promote environments without fear that enable learning and development.

2. Purpose

As an integrated component of the Avenor “Multi-Disciplinary Approach on Well-Being” programme, the Anti-Bullying Policy has the purpose of setting a clear theoretical and practical framework that helps all the members of the community identify correctly bullying incidents, report them in an appropriate manner and design individual intervention plans that help the parties involved to integrate this experience in their process of learning and development in a positive and supportive manner and without resorting directly to applying severe sanctions (depending on the case).

Aims

- to prevent or stop continuation of bullying behaviour;
- to react to incidents of bullying in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way;
- to safeguard the child or children experiencing the bullying and provide support for him/them;
- to ensure the application of appropriate consequences for the children who initiated/participated in bullying incidents;
- to provide support in restoring well-being at the level of the group that was affected by the bullying incident.

3. Definitions

What is bullying?

Bullying is the **repetitive, intentional hurting** of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power (the person or group who initiates the hurting feel(s) omnipotent, while the person or group who is being hurt feel(s) helpless).

In the attempt to give a coherent definition of bullying, the specialists have tried to conceptualise this social phenomenon in order to be able to also structure different strategies of diminishing bullying activities.

Taking into account its profound social nature, interventions around bullying acts can carry relationship – based solutions rather than punitive actions targeted at an individual level.

A systemic approach of the social environment in which bullying incidents happen will ensure that all the parties involved are identified correctly and involved in solving the incident. This does not, under any circumstances, imply the absence of severe sanctions in the eventual situation in which bullying persists.

What is not bullying?

- isolated episodes of social rejection or dislike
- isolated acts of peer-to-peer disrespectful, rude or spiteful behaviour
- isolated acts of aggression or intimidation
- isolated arguments, disagreements or fights.

Our school's mission of "co-creating the best possible future for each and everyone one of us" has embedded the certainty that all the members of the Avenor community have the right to a safe, equitable environment without intimidation, harassment and discrimination. Any potential attempt of intimidation, harassment or discrimination will be analysed by the PSHE Coordinator and Form Tutor.

Any attempt of intimidation, harassment and discrimination is considered inadmissible and therefore will not be tolerated. Avenor's firm attitude in this respect can be explained by the fact that any form of bullying correlates with a severe lack of respect and appreciation towards others.

Persistent intimidation, harassment and discrimination can lead to stress, the refusal to come to school and long-term emotional difficulties.

Intimidation = producing physical and/or psychological aggression in a systematic and long-term manner to one or more individuals. Intimidation can be defined operationally as written, verbal, non-verbal and behavioural attacks, without being limited to threats, insults or inhumane gestures initiated by a child or adult, with a hostile potential.

These actions:

- can generate discomfort and humiliation;
- can interfere with the overall academic progress;
- can decrease the level of involvement and participation in curricular and co-curricular activities;
- can produce a power imbalance in the social relationships.

Intimidation can take the form of, without being limited to:

- teasing;
- threats;
- cyberattacks;
- physical violence acts;

- theft;
- public humiliation;
- social exclusion;
- spreading rumours and untrue information.

Harassment = threats, insults, inhumane gestures delivered in a written, verbal, non-verbal and behavioural manner in relation with children or adults that:

- place a person in a situation of fear, harm or property damage;
- interferes with performance, seeking opportunities and claiming benefits;
- has a negative impact on the emotional state and wellbeing of the individual;
- has a negative impact on the course of academic progress and socialising process.

The attacks that make use of cybernetic means imply disseminating images, pictures, written pieces, text messages or blog posts that make reference to an individual with the sole purpose of disparagement, and therefore generate stress and emotional discomfort.

Avenor demands at a community level that all its members demonstrate maturity in respecting the rights of all individuals, as well as their uniqueness, in focusing on academic activities and in using in appropriate manner school equipment and facilities.

At Avenor we take seriously and firmly discourage any form of intimidation and/or harassment that take place in conditions such as:

- any activity initiated by Avenor within the school premises;
- any activity included in the “Learning Outside of the Classroom” programme;
- travelling to or from school with the school buses;
- using an electronic device (personal or property of Avenor) within the school premises or on the school buses to intimidate or harass individuals. Location or timeframe cannot be used as arguments in a case of potential acts of intimidation or harassment;
- threats in the school yard, threats communicated after school hours that are to be given course during school hours or during school transportation.

Avenor in a partnership with the community of parents will use positive discipline methods such as rewarding desirable behaviours, prosocial habits and academic progress in order to strengthen individual prosocial behaviours, a positive school environment and a prosocial culture.

Harassment can be categorised, as follows:

- **Physical:** hitting, pushing, taking and hiding someone else’s belongings;
- **Emotional:** nickname calling, insults, teasing, sending insulting messages, an unfriendly attitude, social exclusion, persistent looks with a hidden meaning, spreading rumours via email, text messages, blogs or social media channels.

Discrimination = the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age or sex.

Discrimination can make reference to aspects such as:

- race, skin colour, religion, faith and culture;
- special educational needs, disabilities and illnesses;

- physical features;
- family situation, adoption situation, parents or guardians.

Signs and symptoms that lead to a suspicion of harassment or intimidation:

- avoidance/refusal to attend school;
- decreased self-confidence, increased anxiety, increased tendency to abandon activities;
- self-harming attempts or threats;
- crying episodes before bedtime, nightmares and nocturnal enuresis;
- a recurring state of “feeling ill” in the mornings;
- decreased academic progress;
- damaged clothing and school supplies;
- presence of unexplainable bruises and injuries;
- decreased eating appetite;
- persistent fear of failure;
- constant fear to go to and return from school;
- a radical change in the system of personal habits.

In acts of intimidation, harassment and/or discrimination, within the group a series of social roles are (un)consciously adopted, such as:

- **leader:** exerts increased power over the group, initiates acts of social domination, benefits from the (in)direct support of the group;
- **supporters:** associate themselves with the leader motivated by a feeling of fear;
- **bystanders:** a silent social majority that assist to the act without taking any action motivated by a feeling of helplessness;
- **defenders:** make direct attempts to stop the act.

4. Types of bullying

Bullying related to racism, religion and culture = a range of hurtful behaviours, both physical and psychological, that make the person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status.

Examples: physical attacks or threats, verbal abuse, mimicry and racist jokes, racist graffiti, refusing to cooperate in work or play with students from minority ethnic communities.

Sexist bullying has an impact on both genders and can occur irrespective of the gender of the student who bullies, as well as of the student who is bullied.

Examples: abusive name-calling, looks, gestures and comments about appearance and emerging puberty, sexual innuendoes and propositions, pornographic material or graffiti with sexual content, sexual assault, rape.

Homophobic bullying = persistent hurtful actions targeted at students who have are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

It has been shown that students who experience homophobic bullying:

- have higher levels of absenteeism and truancy in secondary school;
- are less likely than their peers to enter higher or further education;
- are more likely to commit suicide.

Bullying related to disability and special educational needs = persistent hurtful actions targeted at students who have special educational needs.

Cyberbullying = the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly mobile telephones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone. Cyberbullying can become a method of carrying out other types of bullying such as racist bullying, homophobic bullying, bullying related to disabilities and special educational needs.

Cyberbullying differs in significant ways from other types of bullying. For example, the invasion of home/personal space, the difficulty of controlling electronically circulated messages and the profile of the students involved in this type of bullying.

5. Avenor Staff Roles

The Head of School has the legal right to design the Internal Order Regulations and ensure that they are respected. In this respect the Head of School:

- ensures that all the staff members will have the opportunity to discuss the procedures;
- ensures that all the staff members will become actively involved in reviewing the procedures, according to the situations that occurred during the educational year;
- asks for procedures and strategies;
- discusses with the SLT the development of anti-bullying strategies and procedures;
- ensures that all staff members benefit from training that enables them to apply the strategies and procedures in a coherent manner;
- ensures that the anti-bullying procedures are disseminated among the teaching staff, the non-teaching staff, parents, students and volunteers;

The Director of Learning:

- is responsible with the continuous implementation of the anti-bullying policy, procedures and strategies;
- ensures that the procedures and strategies implemented have a constructive impact on both the bully, as well as the bullied parties;
- informs the Head of School with regards to any anti-bullying incidents that occur within the school campus;
- consults with the Head of School in relation with having anti-bullying trainings for parents and staff members, in order to benefit from new and varied means of solving incidents of harassment and intimidation;
- ensures and follows-up on keeping an accurate written record of all the anti-bullying incidents.

The PSHE Coordinator:

- ensures the implementation of positive anti-bullying strategies that benefit the entire community;
- monitors the evolution of situations of bullying;
- creates individual intervention plans;
- maintains the contact with the families of the parties involved in bullying cases in order to ensure support for the children.

Form Tutors and Teachers:

- inform the PSHE Coordinator and the Level Coordinator about identified cases of bullying from their group;
- get involved directly in finding adequate anti-bullying solutions and monitor the evolution of bullying cases together with the other team of professionals with responsibilities in this area;
- initiate discussions related to intimidation and harassment during Form Time;

The Non-Teaching Staff and Volunteers:

- know and follow the anti-bullying policies and procedures in place;
- fill in the Incident Form when identifying a case of bullying;
- are alert and intervene immediately in accordance with the existing procedures to stop any harmful situations they might witness;
- Do not allow any bullying case to go unreported or unsolved;
- take appropriate measures that decrease the risk of intimidation and harassment;
- discuss with the teaching staff in order to become more familiar with various aspects related to the topic of intimidation and harassment.

5. Procedure of Approaching Bullying Incidents

1. If there is a presumed or identified case of intimidation or harassment, the situation will be investigated immediately by the teacher who first came in contact with the information, and all the relevant details will be registered with increased accuracy by filling in a **Bullying Report and Incident Form** (please see Addendum No. 1);
2. After collecting all the information relevant for the bullying incident, the teacher will inform the PSHE Coordinator, the Level Coordinator and the Director of Learning;
3. The Director of Learning will then pass on the information to the Head of School;
4. The file containing all the bullying incidents will be placed in the office of the Director of Learning;
5. The Bullying Report and Incident Form will include information about the bully, as well as about the bullied parties;
6. After having finalised the investigation related to the presumed or identified case of bullying, a **Bullying Investigation Report** (please see Addendum No. 2) will be completed and a follow-up meeting with the teachers and families of the students will be organised by the PSHE Coordinator;

7. During the meeting, the parties involved will draft an **Anti-Bullying Intervention Plan** (please see Addendum No. 3);
8. The Anti-Bullying Intervention Plan will be presented for approval to the Director of Learning and the Head of School;
9. For severe cases of bullying that impose sanctions, these measures will be discussed by the SLT;
10. If the sanctions are approved by SLT, the family will be informed and the measures will be implemented in school.

6. Sanctions

In the eventual case in which a student does not comply with the anti-bullying prevention measures applied, in a gradual manner and depending on the severity of each situation, the following sanctions will be applied:

- verbal and written apologies;
- separation from the group, inside the classroom;
- withdrawal of break (spending the break in the classroom) and lunch time reflection in the presence of a teacher;
- withdrawing participation from school trips and sports events that are not an essential part of the curriculum;
- temporary (between 1 – 3 days) or permanent expulsion from school for the severe cases of bullying. The decision will be adopted in the Teachers' Council making use of all the legal measures imposed;

Before resorting to severe sanctions, Avenor will ensure that:

- all the preventive anti-bullying strategies and procedures have been implemented in the attempt to manage in a positive manner the behaviour of the students;
- the family of the students is updated constantly related to the development of the bullying incidents and involved actively in finding new ways of tackling the incidents.

All sanctions will be applied in a gradual manner, will be recorded in the Student's Individual Folder and will abide by the regulations of the Romanian Ministry of Education.

7. Avenor's Commitment When Approaching Bullying Cases

- we will make sure that the students who become the target of acts of intimidation or harassment know that their situation is not ignored;
- we will ensure that the potential initiators of intimidation and/or harassment are made aware that their actions bear consequences and sanctions;
- we are aware that students react differently to intimidation and harassment and therefore, the identification of bullying cases can become quite complex. Taking into account the unique child approach, we will encourage all students to talk to teachers whom they feel connected to about cases of intimidation and/or harassment in order to implement the necessary measures in a timely fashion. In order to facilitate reporting of bullying incidents,

students can write a note and place it in the “Concern Box” located near the secondary entrance of the Senior School building and at the main entrance of the Nursery building;

- we, the Avenor teachers, will highlight continuously that students should not take bullying matters into their own hands and that retaliation of any kind will not be allowed or tolerated;
- we will solve any bullying issues with calm and making use of our reasoning skills;
- we will ensure that the Head of School is made aware and offers support in solving severe cases of bullying;
- the Bullying Report and Incident Form is an internal document used by staff to investigate reports of bullying. As such, it is not maintained in student cumulative files and is not considered a student record. Should a student receive discipline as a result of this report, a separate student discipline form will be completed and entered into the student’s file. We will encourage students to report bullying cases that they have knowledge of or have witnessed.

8. Reporting and Recording Cases of Bullying

- all the intimidation and harassment cases will be recorded and kept under strict confidentiality;
- the file including all the bullying Incident Forms will be placed in the office of the PSHE Coordinator (originals) and in the office of the Director of Learning (copies);
- the incidents will be recorded with full names, without abbreviations and in full length, and will be updated frequently depending on the evolution of each case.