

Peer Abuse (Bullying) Policy

Theodor Herzl School recognises that:

1. Each learner should experience Theodor Herzl as a safe learning environment.
2. The staff should be equipped and empowered to deal with instances of bullying, as well as have mechanisms in place to monitor bullying in general terms.
3. Positive and appropriate behaviour is encouraged among students and adults (educators and parents) alike. Desirable behaviour should be modelled by educators.
4. Bullying is often complex and deserves intervention strategies for all parties involved.
5. Bullying can have devastating physical, emotional, social and psychological effects on a person and/or the environment.
6. Bullying can be seen as on a continuum ranging from disrespect (teasing, mocking, rolling eyes, bantering etc.) to criminal offence.
7. Incidences of bullying can occur on campus, online or between students off-campus, and continue indirectly during the school day. It is therefore important to carefully consider the nature and impact of the incident and the role the school should play in providing an appropriate school-based intervention. Given the above-mentioned points, the school should approach each incident individually and sensitively. When doing so, all perspectives, other school policies and discipline procedures, as well as legislation should be considered.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is the continued dominance of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or persons, by means of intentionally seeking to harm, intimidate or coerce. It includes the following categories:

1. Physical bullying: includes hitting, kicking, rude gestures, extortion, pushing, shoving, taking or damaging belongings – i.e. any form of physical behaviour which hurts others or their property.
2. Verbal bullying: includes name-calling, insulting, repeated teasing, discriminatory remarks (about religion, sexuality, subject choices, abilities, appearance), threatening, sexual harassment and any other form of verbal behaviour designed to hurt another person.

3. Psychological bullying: includes nasty rumours, excluding someone from the group, and isolating someone by preventing others from befriending them.
4. Cyber Bullying: includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, humiliating, threatening, defaming, grooming or terrorising another learner or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs) and on social media platforms.

Many of these behaviours occur frequently, and do not always constitute bullying. In order to ascertain the presence of bullying, most of the following elements MUST be present:

- An initial intent to hurt
- The intent is carried out
- The action is harmful
- There is an imbalance of power
- There is no justification for the action
- The action is persistent but can escalate rapidly
- The bully derives gratification from hurting the other person

When learners and educators become aware of an incident of bullying:

1. At the first level the subject teacher or class head should be made aware of and will deal with incidents. It is imperative that the nature and effect of the incident be clearly defined at this point. If necessary, all staff (and possibly, the parents involved) will be informed of the incident to promote a wider awareness and more effective monitoring of the (potential) problem. If warranted, a written record should be kept on file.
2. In the case of a more serious incident (such as a criminal act of any kind, for example physical or sexual assault, violation of rights, hate crimes, or cyberbullying) the HOD, School Counsellor or Principal can be directly informed.
3. Should the problem persist, the matter must be referred to the School Counsellor and/or HOD of Pastoral Care and Discipline. The situation will be investigated, documented and intervention initiated.
4. Intervention includes interviews, counselling, contacting of parents if applicable, referral and the possibility of disciplinary action. The school's

restorative justice approach will be employed and a case-by-case intervention strategy will be explored as per grievance policy.

5. Learners will be assured of their own “victim protection” when they report an incident and incidents will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially so as to work in the best interest of the child (or children if the perpetrator is also a minor).

When parents become aware of an incident of bullying:

1. Should a parent become aware that a child is being bullied, the child’s grade head can be contacted. Alternatively the Head of Pastoral Care and Discipline or School Counsellor can be informed.
2. The school will follow the same process of investigation and intervention as above, including the possibility of facilitating conversations with parents.
3. Intervention includes interviews, counselling, referral and the possibility of disciplinary action. The school’s restorative justice approach will be employed and a case-by-case intervention strategy will be explored.

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