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Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Introduction and Principles

The European School Bergen (ESB) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all pupils. This Anti-Bullying Policy aligns with the [European Schools’ Pupils’ Well-Being Framework](#). The school maintains a zero-tolerance stance towards bullying in all its forms.

ESB’s mission is to offer a learning environment where students feel secure, valued, and free to express themselves. Differences in background, culture, and perspective are acknowledged and respected. Students are encouraged to develop empathy, communication skills, collaboration, and responsibility as part of their social and emotional growth.

This policy applies to school-related contexts, including classrooms, school related IT platforms, playgrounds, school activities and trips.

This policy is uploaded on the school website under “[Documents](#)”. It is reviewed annually for any necessary updates or amendments.

Guiding principles:

Prevention	creating a safe and respectful school climate through education and engagement.
Shared Responsibility	all members of the community play an active role in identifying, preventing, and addressing bullying.
Intervention	structured, fair, and transparent procedures are followed when incidents occur.

2. Understanding Bullying: What it is and What it is Not

Bullying is defined as repeated and intentional behaviour—verbal, physical, psychological, or electronic—directed at a target who is unable to defend themselves effectively. It includes behaviour that causes physical or emotional harm, fear, or exclusion, creates a hostile school environment, or disrupts learning.

At times, individuals may unintentionally or intentionally cause hurt to others. However, to be classified as bullying, such behaviour must be repeated, deliberate, and persistent. That said, isolated incidents of hurtful or inappropriate conduct are taken seriously and will prompt an appropriate response. Such incidents may lead to discussions or interventions by teachers, advisors, or school management. Even if a specific behaviour does not meet the formal definition of bullying, it may still be harmful, disrespectful, or contrary to the values of the European Schools, and therefore subject to disciplinary measures as outlined in the [General Rules of the European Schools](#) and, for Secondary, the [School Regulations](#). Any students who witness bullying behaviour are encouraged to speak up or seek help from a trusted adult.

Teasing can be playful by nature, depending on context, tone, cultural background and interpretation. Teasing becomes problematic when it is repeated, intended to hurt, embarrass, or exclude someone, or when the other person feels threatened or unsafe.

3. Forms of Bullying

Some forms of bullying include – but are not limited to:

- **Verbal** – insults, ridicule, threats, spreading rumours.
- **Physical** – hitting, pushing, tripping, damaging belongings.
- **Social** – exclusion, intentional ignoring, manipulation of friendships, intimidation, subtle disrespect.
- **Cyberbullying** – online harassment, harmful posts, or sharing private information.
- **Theft or Property Damage** – stealing or deliberately damaging another’s belongings.

Bullying may target individuals based on nationality, language, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

4. Assessing the Severity of Bullying

Assessing severity helps inform appropriate intervention and support. Staff consider:

Frequency and duration	Whether behaviour is isolated, occasional, repeated, or persistent over time.
Power imbalance	Differences in age, group size, social status, physical strength, vulnerability, or language ability.
Nature of the behaviour	Some behaviours may be considered severe even if they occur once.
Impact on the pupil	Fear, distress, shame, anxiety, withdrawal, behavioural change, or difficulty functioning at school.
Scope and spread	Whether behaviour occurs between individuals, within groups, across contexts, or is widely witnessed.

The prevention and resolution of bullying involve all stakeholders:

Students	treat each other with respect, report inappropriate behaviour, report incidents of bullying and support peers, reflect about the acceptability of behaviour
Teachers & Educational Advisors	model respectful behaviour, create a safe classroom atmosphere, establish clear behavioural expectations, encourage pupils to take responsibility and act promptly on concerns.
Parents/Guardians	maintain open communication with their children and collaborate with the school when concerns arise.
Care Team	provide expertise, coordination, and follow-up in complex or ongoing cases.
Management	create conditions for a safe school culture, ensure implementation of the policy, intervene in bullying cases necessary.

Note:

In **Nursery and Primary**, the class teacher is the central figure in observing, reporting, and addressing bullying.

In **Secondary**, educational advisors and class teachers are the first point of contact.

5. Recognising Warning Sign

Staff pay attention not only to direct reports but also to warning signs that may indicate a pupil is experiencing bullying or social distress:

- Persistent fear of specific peers, spaces, or school.
- Marked changes in mood, behaviour, or social engagement.
- Physical symptoms that do not have a clear medical cause..
- Emotional dysregulation disproportionate to the situation.
- Statements indicating hopelessness, shame, or self-blame.
- Loss of previously secure peer relationships.
- Escalating avoidance or withdrawal.

Pupils showing warning signs may be referred to the school psychologist for further assessment and support.

6. Prevention

Prevention is the foundation of ESB’s anti-bullying policy.

Nursery and Primary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classroom Rules/Interactions: simple, clear rules appropriate for young children, e.g.<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ We listen to each other.→ We take turns to speak.→ We respect personal space.→ We do not touch others’ belongings.→ We include everyone.→ We solve disagreements by talking about our feelings. • Empathy and Respect Education: stories, role-playing, and circle time to teach kindness, inclusion, and understanding differences.• Team and Confidence Building: group activities, simple school projects, and outdoor play to encourage cooperation and a sense of belonging.• Peer Support: buddy systems or pairing older and younger pupils to encourage care and responsibility. <p>During the 2025/26 School Year, our Well-Being Project (entitled ‘Ensemble Stay Blij’) has been rolled out across the primary cycle and explores different aspects of well-being each month, encouraging children to reflect, build resilience and strengthen positive habits both in school and at home.</p>
Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethics and Religion Classes: integrate discussions on bullying and prevention, communication, empathy, and respect.• Team-building activities: projects, school trips, and activities that develop empathy, class cohesion, and communication skills.• Peer-support initiatives: e.g. Pupils’ Committee, buddy system to promote inclusion and kindness, class initiatives, fostering empathy, respect and a positive class atmosphere.

7. Intervention Procedures

When bullying is suspected or reported, the following steps can be taken:

1.	The class teacher or educational advisor gathers information and consults colleagues. Reporting can be made verbally or in writing to any trusted adult, such as the class teacher, educational advisor, ...
2.	The targeted student is listened to with empathy and reassurance. Notes or statements may be taken. Parents are informed.
3.	The student reported for bullying is listened to and spoken to about their behaviour. Notes or statements may be taken. Parents are informed.
4.	<p>An action plan is established, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) mediation between students where appropriate.b) interviews with involved students and parents to understand the situation.c) engagement of supportive peers to aid the targeted student.d) class-wide restorative discussions to address the climate without singling out anyone.e) promoting group responsibility rather than punishment. <p>Restorative measures may be used to help the student reflect on their behaviour, develop empathy, and repair the harm caused.</p>
5.	Follow-up: staff check separately with all students involved to ensure bullying has ceased. Persistent or serious cases are escalated to the Care Team and Management.
6.	The student is offered a conversation with the school psychologist where appropriate.

Note: Younger children may require more guided discussion, visual aids, and adult support to articulate feelings.

8. Rights of Students

Students targeted by bullying have the right to:

- ✓ Be heard, supported, and protected.
- ✓ Confidentiality, except where disclosure is necessary for safety.
- ✓ Access psychological and social support if needed.

9. Sanctions and Consequences

We promote restorative practices that focus on understanding, empathy, and shared responsibility rather than punishment. The aim is to restore harmony by encouraging the community to work together. In some cases, additional sanctions may be needed to address serious behaviour and ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

- Sanctions are proportionate to the severity, frequency, and impact of the behaviour.
- The aim is to halt bullying, restore positive relationships, and promote learning and accountability.
- Interventions and consequences are confidential, except when disclosure is necessary to ensure safety or involve another student directly (e.g., in a written apology).
- Alongside consequences, students who bully engage in guided reflection and empathy exercises, helping them recognise harm caused and develop insight into their motivations. These reflective elements are essential to prevent recurrence and support emotional growth.
- When sanctions are applied, **additional guidance or explanation may be provided** to help the student understand the rules, the purpose of the sanction, and the impact of their behaviour.

<p>Nursery & Primary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Guided restorative discussions with the student(s) targeted and the student(s) involved. → Teaching moments about empathy, respect, and understanding consequences. → Temporary adjustments in group activities or play to promote positive interactions. → Parent meetings to ensure consistency between school/home. → Opportunities for the student(s) involved to repair relationships, such as helping or supporting classmates.
<p>Secondary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Restorative meetings and structured discussions facilitated by class teachers or educational advisors. → Written apologies or reflective exercises designed to develop accountability. → Meetings with parents to establish action plans and monitor progress. Temporary restrictions from certain school activities if appropriate. → Formal disciplinary measures in line with the Secondary School Regulations including detention or internal/external sanctions, if behaviour persists. → Participation in social skills or peer-support programmes to address underlying causes of behaviour.

10. Anti-Bullying Approaches by Cycle

Area	Nursery/Primary	Secondary
Classroom Rules / Expectations	Simple, clear rules: listen, take turns, respect personal space, include everyone, solve disagreements verbally	Explicit behavioural expectations; mentor/teacher-led discussions about responsibility, respect, and school culture
Teaching Empathy & Respect	Stories, role-play, circle time, visual aids to understand feelings and inclusion	Moral, Religion, Ethics classes; workshops on communication, empathy, and digital citizenship
Team-building & Confidence Activities	Group projects, outdoor play, cooperative tasks, buddy system	Projects, school trips, ...
Peer Support / Buddy Systems	Older pupils paired with younger pupils; guided peer support	Structured mentoring promoting kindness and inclusion
Reporting Mechanisms	Report to teacher or parent; teacher observes behaviour; adult intervention primary	Report to class teacher, educational advisor, or trusted teacher;
Intervention Procedures	Adult-led discussion, restorative guidance, parental involvement, teaching empathy and repair	Structured intervention based on restorative meetings, follow-up meetings, possible disciplinary action if necessary
Sanctions / Consequences	Educational and restorative focus; minor informal sanctions	Restorative focus; written apologies, temporary restrictions, formal disciplinary measures if behaviour persists
Parental Involvement	Parents informed; guidance and reassurance central	Parents informed; meetings with students and parents
Monitoring & Follow-up	Teacher monitors classroom climate and student well-being; regular check-ins	Class teachers/educational advisors incidents; follow-up meetings; escalation if necessary



IS THIS BULLYING?

Hurtful behaviour was reported on: _____

The person that has been contacted first was: _____

The pupil who was targeted, name and class: _____

The person who reported hurtful behaviour was: _____

- The pupil targeted by hurtful behaviour _____
- A peer of the targeted pupil, name _____
- The pupil's mother, father, ... _____
- A teacher, name: _____
- Someone else, name: _____

Description

Provide specific examples of the behaviours that were perceived as hurtful, including what happened, when it occurred, who was involved, and any witnesses, if applicable.

Type of behaviour reported:

- Physical (hitting, kicking, pushing, etc.)
- Verbal (name-calling, insults, threats)
- Social/Relational (exclusion, rumours, manipulation)
- Cyberbullying (online messages, images, threats)
- Discriminatory (racial, cultural, gender-related, SEN-related, etc.)
- Other (please specify): _____

How many times hurtful behaviour has occurred? _____

When was the last time it occurred? _____

For how long has the situation been going on? _____

Pupils who have taken part in the hurtful behaviour? _____

On the basis of the information acquired, this is:

- A conflict or a fight between pupil
- A case of hurt feelings due to misunderstandings
- A single case of an aggressive or a hurtful act
- bullying → to be directed to the ADD of the relevant cycle