

A process to manage Peer Abuse (bullying) at Theodor Herzl Schools

The process set out below recognizes that:

1. The school is obliged to ensure that each learner experiences Theodor Herzl as a safe learning environment.
2. The professional educators are both adequately equipped and empowered to deal with instances of peer abuse.
3. The Campus Head and Principals will ensure that mechanisms are in place to revisit and monitor peer abuse regularly at the Theodor Herzl Schools.
4. It is of primary importance that good behaviour/relationships be encouraged and rewarded.
5. The bully is also a victim, and is in need of counselling.
6. On an annual basis, each class will revise its own code of good behaviour, and that the learners will collectively accept responsibility for the maintenance of good order in their classes. The core issue here is that each learner takes ownership of the process.
7. The expectation that learners abide by this code of good behaviour, places on all adults (educators and parents) the responsibility to lead by example in their dealings with learners and with each other.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is the continued dominance of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or persons. 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, threatening, or terrorizing 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).

Bullying has the effect of:

1. Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a pupil;
2. Placing a pupil in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
3. Placing a pupil in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; or
4. Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a pupil's educational opportunities.

Many of these behaviours occur frequently, and do not always constitute bullying. In order to ascertain the presence of bullying, 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
- The bully derives gratification from hurting the other person

When EDUCATORS become aware of an incident of peer abuse:

1. At the first level the subject teacher or grade head 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. Should the problem persist, the matter must be referred to the relevant School Counsellor. The Counsellor must immediately investigate, draft a written report for the Principal/Campus Head and intervene by counselling both parties. The Principal/Campus Head must be kept informed of progress made, and the School Counsellor may decide if the parents should be involved at this point. It is important that a written record be kept from this point onward.
3. When the School Counsellor deems it necessary, the matter will be referred to the Principal/Campus Head who will, after further investigation, call on the parents to discuss the matter.
4. The focus throughout the above process will be to counsel, re-direct and mediate.
5. Should the situation warrant it, suspension or even expulsion may be the outcome. A Disciplinary Committee will be convened, which will consist of Professional Educators and Board Members or suitable qualified professionals to hear the matter. The outcome must, however, remain a professional decision.

When PARENTS become aware of an incident of peer abuse:

1. Should a parent from the Pre-Primary and Primary Schools feel that his/her child is/has become a victim of peer abuse, they should liaise directly with the child's class teacher. High School parents should contact either the Grade Head or the School Counsellor.

2. In certain circumstances it may be a good idea for the parents of children who are caught up in a peer abuse situation to have a meeting, to try to resolve the differences. The school has structures in place to facilitate a meeting of this nature.
3. It is important for parents to encourage a child who is being abused or who is aware of abuse taking place to break the “code of silence”, in order for the victim to get support, the situation to be monitored and the bully to get the appropriate help.
4. Parents should never encourage their children to retaliate.
5. Parents must also be sensitive to the fact that their child may be “the bully”. Under these circumstances, it is imperative that they are supportive of the school in dealing with the matter, so that their child may receive the necessary counselling.

When LEARNERS become aware of an incident of peer abuse:

1. Learners must know that “evil will triumph where good people remain silent.” Therefore both victims and eye witnesses must be aware that, where possible, they are primarily responsible for attempting to resolve incidents. It is the belief of the school that all learners be empowered to deal with peer abuse.
2. They must also understand that speaking out can never be “tattle-tailing” when someone is being hurt.
3. If the situation remains unresolved, they should immediately report an incident to a teacher or the School Counsellor.
4. It is important to be supportive of the victim.

A Theodor Herzl Recipe for Good Relationships

1. All those around you in the school should be treated with respect, dignity, kindness and consideration.
2. We should demonstrate care and concern for those who are troubled.
3. Everyone must take ownership of and abide by his/her class code of good behaviour.
4. In short, do unto others as you would have others do unto you.