



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is committed to providing a caring and safe environment where all children can develop to their full potential. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our setting. If behavioural expectations are consistent and reasonable boundaries are put in place by caring and supportive staff, it can minimise the occurrence of bullying.
- Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. No one person or group, whether staff or child, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Although bullying in the strongest context of the word does not generally occur at Playgroup it is recognised by staff that preschool children are developing their personalities and friendships, as well as exploring boundaries and appropriate behaviour which can result in conflict and clashes of personality.
- Staff aim to minimise occurrences by being observant and recognising that some children prefer the company of others and some don't. Fully understanding each child and observing them helps with the restorative approach we use. If any level of bullying is suspected, observed or reported, the matter will be taken seriously, dealt with promptly and all parties will be supported appropriately and fairly.
- This will involve working towards a shared understanding of the causes of the behaviour. Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup understands that all behaviour is a form of communication and should be recognised as such. Matters will be documented as necessary and reported to room leader/manager or/and parents if deemed necessary.

Bullying

Bullying has been described as the 'willful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone' (Tattum & Herbert 2000). Bullying behavior has four key aspects- it's hurtful, intentional, repetitive and involves a power imbalance.

The following are considered types of bullying (this list is not exhaustive):

- Verbal Bullying - this is the most common type and includes teasing, name-calling and threats.
- Non-Verbal Bullying - this includes non-verbal forms of communication



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including hand gestures; facial expressions and body language.

- Physical Bullying - this can range from a push or shove to a physical assault.
- Exclusion Bullying - Phrases such as 'you're not playing with us' may indicate bullying of this kind.
- Spoiling/Hiding Things - Damaging or hiding the work or possessions of another person.

Recognising Bullying

The following signs may indicate that 'something is wrong' (not an exhaustive list). Staff and parents need to consider and be alert to all the possibilities, including bullying. For example:

- Unwillingness to come to the Playgroup, which they had previously enjoyed
- A typical soiling
- Fear to say what is happening when given an opportunity to do so
- Disturbed sleep & becoming upset for no apparent reason either at home/Playgroup
- Unexplained behaviour e.g. becoming withdrawn in groups or showing signs of stress
- Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed

Playgroup will:

- Provide an enabling and proactive environment in order to minimise opportunities for bullying
- Use any opportunity to discuss the appropriate way to behave towards each other, eg in small and large group time, persona dolls, when going outside, snack time etc
- Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any issues that arise, involving parents where necessary in a positive and calm manner
- The staff will have a firm but fair approach to behaviour management. The rules should be few, simple and easy to understand, and will be displayed in simple form, by using visuals as much as possible so the children can understand them easily
- For instance, the rules will say
 - We walk inside, we can run outside
 - We use our inside voices and we listen to each other
 - We use kind and caring hands and don't hurt each other
 - Inside and outside, we try and help each other
 - Inside and outside, we take turns and share with each other
- Staff will praise positive behaviour and interactions amongst children



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- Staff will model positive behaviour amongst themselves, children and parents
- We will not use materials or equipment which gives negative views of any group because of their ethnic origin, gender, etc
- Encourage children to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people, exploring what friendship is
- Encourage children to treat everyone with respect. Follow the ethos of BE KIND, CARE and SHARE

Procedures to Deal with Bullying

- If a problem arises, staff will encourage restorative approaches including supporting children to express their feelings in a safe space. Empathy-building activities and the use of stories can be employed, and negative language will be gently challenged
- If a problem persists it will be discussed between the Key Worker and the parents, and a new rule agreed or further advice sought, in case of additional needs
- Staff must be consistent, follow the rules, acknowledge positive actions and practice problem solving steps(see **Appendix 1- Six Steps of Conflict Resolution**). They will try and nip the issue in the bud before it escalates
- If unwanted behaviour persists, staff will contact the parents. If necessary staff will hold separate meetings with both set of parents to share observations about any issues arising and agree together an Action Plan. Parents will be asked to sign the Action Plan and to work with the staff on its implementation.
- Parents are invited to be involved in the drawing up of any rules and their co-operation is necessary in carrying them out. If a parent has any concerns, they should consult with the staff as soon as possible. If a parent feels the issue has not been adequately addressed or they wish to take matter further, parents should follow the procedures set out in Compliments/Comments/Complaints Policy.
- If the Playgroup staff believe that the child displaying bullying behaviour has any underlying issues that may suggest a child protection issue, they are advised to forward their concerns to the Gateway Team and follow the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.
- If Playgroup staff feel they have exhausted all attempts to resolve an issue, they will then bring the issue to the Management Committee.
- The issue will be then be discussed in strict confidence, with Management Committee and any external bodies deemed necessary will be brought in to assist in the management of situation. Parents/ guardians will be kept informed at all times in the process.
- If a solution still cannot be found, the Management Committee reserve the



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right to exclude the child for a temporary period or permanently if all avenues have been exhausted. Please note this is a **last resort**, and will be avoided if at all possible.

Appendix

Six steps of conflict resolution

1. **Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.** Place yourself between children, on their level. Use a calm voice and gentle touch; remain neutral rather than take sides.
2. **Acknowledge children's feelings.** Say something simple such as "You look really upset." If needed, set limits positively- "Pushing needs to stop" and hold the object.
3. **Gather information.** Ask "What's the problem?" Or describe the problem you see and look for yes or no response. Do not ask 'why' questions as young children focus on what the problem is rather than understanding the reasons behind it.
4. **Restate the problem.** "So the problem is..." Use and extend the children's vocabulary.
5. **Ask for solutions and choose one together.** Ask "What can we do to solve this problem?". Encourage children to think of solutions but offer options if the children are unable to at first.
6. **Be prepared to give follow up support.** Acknowledge children's accomplishments e.g. "You solved the problem!" Be prepared to give follow-up support.

Problem solving actions and phrases guidance taken from High/Scope programme and Kids and Conflict website.

www.kidsandconflict.com



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This policy was adapted at a meeting of our playgroup held on the 1st September 2025

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the management team to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

This policy was reviewed by the Ballygawley Early Years Management Committee on:

Date: 01/09/2026

Signed:
(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Name and Position: Iona Devine, Chairperson

Reviewed on:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position:

This policy links with the following policies;

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Confidentiality and Client Access to Records policy
- Data Protection policy
- Equal Opportunities policy
- Participation & Partnership with Parents policy
- Building Positive Relationships policy