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26th November 2007

Dear Parents,

Our school recently won a prize in the Pride of Place competition for our work on the maintenance and development of our local environment. Well done to all and particularly to our Green Schools committee for helping us to focus on environmental issues. A cheque for €200 was accepted by Natalie Glendon and Sinead Nolan on behalf of the school. Thanks also to Kathleen Lawlor and Mrs. Byrne for their help on the night.

As part of their preparation for their Confirmation, our 6th Class will take part in a Mass of commitment this weekend. Many thanks to Mrs. O'Connor and all those involved in the important work of preparation for the sacrament.

We are holding an anti-bullying week this week to help to prevent bullying in our school. The teachers will be working with the children in the classroom and please find attached a section from our revised anti-bullying policy which is due to be ratified shortly by the Board of Management.

We will be hosting our Christmas Concert on Tuesday 11th and Wednesday 12th December. Details to follow.

Yours faithfully,

Principal

8. Our Preventive Strategy

Leighlinbridge N.S. provides a supportive environment for all pupils and this is particularly important with regard to the prevention of bullying. The teachers are committed to being approachable and supportive of their pupils. It can take a lot of courage for a child to speak out about bullying and it is extremely important that a child is listened to and believes that they will be listened to. If incidents of bullying do occur they will be dealt with as detailed in Section 9. Our most important strategy in dealing with bullying is creating and maintaining an environment in which bullying is prevented. Children are encouraged to speak out and adults are willing to listen and act decisively. The following strategies are used in our school to help in the prevention of bullying:

- A school environment is maintained which encourages respect, trust, caring, consideration and support for others both when working and playing together;
- All school staff act as good role models for the pupils;
- Kind, sensitive and caring behaviour is encouraged;
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Pupils are encouraged and praised for their various talents and skills and are given chances to show them;
- An Anti-Bullying Week is held in the first term of each school year to highlight what bullying is, its effects and the strategies the children can use to counter it;
- Unfair and negative comparison of pupils is avoided;
- Pupils are regularly encouraged to look after each other;
- Pupils are regularly encouraged to work together in a helpful manner;
- A mentoring system for pupils is being developed;
- Bullying is addressed directly through the curriculum in Social, Personal and Health Education;
- A culture of speaking out about bullying is developed and maintained;
- Supervision of pupils in and outside the school building is comprehensive and watchful for signs of bullying;
- Pupils are regularly reminded of the school rules from the Code of Behaviour;
- Pupils who are being challenging are made aware of the sanctions that are used in response to misbehaviour.

Prevention Tips for Parents

Some children are more prone to bullying than others. This may be because of factors beyond their control i.e. their physical appearance. These factors do not justify bullying – no one deserves to be bullied. There is a great deal you as a parent can do to lessen the possibility of your child being a victim:

Build Confidence

Confident young people are more likely to stand up for themselves if they are bullied. Confidence grows when given praise. It is important to be patient and praise your child frequently.

Teach Your Child to be Friendly and Sociable

A person's sociability and style of communication send out strong signals to other people. Children who are popular with their peers tend to be confident, independent and are able to take responsibility for themselves and others. They are cheerful, sensitive to others and can

organize and participate in a range of games and activities. They have the ability to manage their interactions with peers without aggression and can resolve conflicts verbally and rationally, offering suitable alternative solutions for a better outcome. Children learn friendship skills through imitation and observation, but some may need direct instruction and practice

Promote a Positive Self Image

Self-image and physical appearance are very important, particularly as a child approaches adolescence. Your child should be taught personal hygiene, good table manners and should have basic information such as the facts of life.

Other Useful Tips

Children should know that it is good to have friends in more than one area of their lives, for instance in their neighbourhood, and in hobby or sports groups, so that if things go wrong they will have something to fall back on.

Teaching your child to develop social skills will help to reduce the chances of him/her becoming isolated and an easier target for bullying.

Using humour is a great way to prevent a bullying situation. It is difficult to bully a person who refuses to take it seriously. Humour is especially useful for dealing with verbal bullying.

Teach your child self esteem, to walk tall and straight in a confident manner as opposed to looking scared and uncertain.

It is important that your child learns to protect his/her own personal space. If your child is challenged physically by someone standing in front of them, they can protect their personal space by placing their schoolbag in front of them, or standing sideways while maintaining eye contact and making an assertive "I" statement. For example, "I need some room here" or "I can't breathe, could you stand back a bit please?"

Young people should be encouraged to speak clearly. Discourage mumbling or speaking so quietly that they are constantly being asked to repeat themselves. Habits such as interrupting all the time, being noisy or shrill, showing off, being a know-all, and not listening to others should also be discouraged.

Help your child practice looking in the mirror and saying "no" or "leave me alone" in a clear voice looking into their own eyes as they say it. Use role-play to act out threatening situations and practice responding calmly and firmly. Here are some examples, which could be used, in a bullying situation, but you can make up your own. It is best to pick one, stick to it, and practise it at home...

- "I can do it."
- "I'm as good as they are."
- "I don't have to put up with this."
- "This doesn't bother me."
- "I'm keeping calm."
- "I feel good about me!"
- "I can handle this."
- "It's their problem not mine."
- "I'm OK and I'm cool."

These phrases can help your child to feel good about him/herself when s/he comes under pressure. This is the feeling the bully wants to destroy.