

Focus Institute of Gymnastics Bullying Policy.

Statement of Intent

Focus Institute of Gymnastics is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our members so they can participate in sport in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our club.

If bullying does occur, all club members should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *Whistle Blowing* club. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the club welfare office.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be: • Emotional

being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. threatening gestures)
pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

- Physical
- Racist
- Sexual
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality

- Verbal
- Cyber

name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse

Mobile threats by text messaging & calls Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

The club has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this Policy

- All club members, coaches and volunteers and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All club members, coaches and volunteers should know what the club policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All players and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a club we take bullying seriously. Gymnasts and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

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Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to the club welfare officer, member of the club committee or an adult you can trust.
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the NGB welfare officer.
3. In serious cases parents should be informed and asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.
7. If mediation fails and the bullying continues the club will initiate disciplinary proceedings according to the club constitution.

Recommended Club Action

If the club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation, they should follow the procedure outlined below:

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If this fails/not appropriate a small panel (made up from Chairman, Club Welfare Officer, Secretary, committee members) should meet with the parent and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account.
3. The same 3 persons should meet with the alleged bully and parent/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed.
4. If bullying has in their view taken place the individual should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
5. In some cases, the parent of the bully or bullied Gymnast can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
6. All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning.

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Outcomes

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
2. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered.
3. If possible, the Gymnasts will be reconciled.
4. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

Prevention

1. All club members and parents will be signposted to the policy upon joining the club.
2. The Club Welfare Officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with members to discuss the issue openly and constructively.