6.1 ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

School is one of the most significant places in the daily experience of children: the amount of hours they spend there, the importance of what they learn there, the quality of the social relationships they build there mean that this place influences the growth path of every child.

From this point of view, it is essential that teachers:

- have adequate information and training on the phenomenon;
- are open to confrontation and dialogue with children;
- implement careful observation of classroom behaviour;
- emphasise the importance of cooperation between school and family;
- impose respect for the rules without tolerating forms of violence in any way;
- prepare activities that are necessary to make the phenomenon known also among young people;
- implement interventions necessary for the well-being of the targets as well as the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour.

One of the main objective of teachers will also be to enhance not only cognitive but also social skills in pupils, with particular attention to emotional literacy and development of empathic awareness, which is necessary to enter into relations with others and succeed in encoding their emotions. They will also have to make pupils aware of the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying, trying to promote targeted paths through which they will be able to convey the importance of knowledge of verbal and non-verbal messages, which underlie everyday communication between people. A network of operators, a support team with responsible contact person, should be set up within the school, who will:

❖ train teachers;

❖ organise specific meetings with parents and young people, in which issues of legality, relationship and conflict management can also be discussed;

❖ define the rules to be implemented within the institute, including about the use of mobile phones at school

❖ administer questionnaires to pupils and parents to assess their level of knowledge of the phenomenon;

❖ monitor and supervise behaviour within the school;

❖ contact the judicial authorities or territorial services if the need arises.

The quality of the dialogue as well as the authoritativeness of the school figures are elements that can easily play in favour of protective actions to be taken in favour of the students: it is therefore important that if teachers become aware of bullying behaviour or episodes, they promptly try to curb them, since such actions if not curtailed in the short term can then recur and continue over time. It will be necessary to be sensitive and attentive not only to the targets of such violence, but also to the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour, who are considered to be subjects in difficulty and most at risk. Mild or acute conflicts that may occur between peers can easily become acts of bullying and prevarication that are repeated and also carried out via the Internet, with serious amplifying effects for the targets. For this reason, it is important to implement measures that also involve children who are not directly affected, so that they do not become progressively desensitised to suffering, empathy is reduced and social contagion is fostered, encouraging them to imitate the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour's misbehaviour.

An integrated school policy will therefore have to be implemented. The aim is designing modes of intervention that will take into consideration:

● The peer group: they play a key role (from those who support and help the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour to those who defend the targets or remain indifferent). Their behaviour can radically change the situation in one way or another. By Observing the dynamics within the group, it’s possible to understand more accurately the conflict situations that may be present and consequently to plan activities and interventions aimed at stemming them, thus creating a more cooperative and collaborative climate within the class.

● School culture: this refers to the set of rules in force within the school, the general classroom and school climate. An environment that punishes all forms of prevarication and violence tends to influence and condition the behaviour of the children who attend it.

● The community with its values: aggressive, arrogant, cunning and prevaricating behaviour can also be encouraged by certain cultural models, present in the media and practised in the school environment.

● The educational relationship between teachers and pupils: it is essential to foster a dialogue with students and establish a relaxed atmosphere within the classroom that can also consequently improve pupils' learning.

● The relationship with families: establishing a relationship of collaboration and mutual trust with the sole objective of the well-being of the children.

Specifically, the school should:

■ Empowering teachers and students to intervene when difficult situations occur.

■ Formulating a system of rules that is clearly against all forms of prevarication and violence.

■ Facilitating meetings between teachers and parents also by organising meeting and discussion days.

■ Organising and promoting teacher study groups for the development of a good school climate.

■ Implementing courses aimed at developing awareness of verbal and non-verbal messages underlying everyday communication with others.

■ Providing children with equipped and appropriate spaces for recreation and various school activities.

■ Sharing any problems with experts.

Specifically, the teacher must:

- Being open to dialogue: very often, children do not have the courage to open up and tell what is happening or what upsets them. It is essential that they perceive teachers as a point of reference, listening and welcoming.
- Working on the knowledge and recognition of emotions, trying to highlight the importance of empathy as the main factor underlying interactions.
- Improving social skills, skills that enable us to communicate and interact with other people, not only directly and verbally but also through gestures and body language.
- Paying attention to the dynamics between pupils; supervising them during recess and lunchtime.
- Fostering a climate in which children can confront each other openly, without fear of judgement, in which peaceful problem-solving is possible, and in which acceptance of others, acceptance, cooperation and solidarity are fostered.
- Administering questionnaires within the class group to test knowledge of the phenomenon.
- Setting and enforcing rules by providing clarifications on them, praise and sanctions attached to them. It is important not to underestimate the aggressive behaviour that occurs and not to let humiliation and abuse, to the detriment of weaker children, pass as 'normal' attitudes.
- Promoting cooperative and collaborative learning.
- Avoid exaggerated and excessive forms of control that intimidate pupils: instead, try to establish a constructive dialogue with them by implementing, when necessary, a direct, firm and decisive approach that aims to solve problems.
- Avoiding the use of violent and particularly aggressive language, underestimating or trivialising particularly aggressive episodes or situations of discomfort manifested by the pupils, maintaining silence or secrecy about what has transpired. In-depth discussions with CYP engaged in bullying behaviour, targets and the students' parents, activities that aim to develop assertiveness, foster an improvement in self-esteem, enhance negotiation skills, improve skills for dealing with prejudice, teach how to control anger and impulses, represent the various possible actions targeted at the individual subject, which aim to try

to change the behaviour of the students concerned and thus curb the problem manifested.

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