

Okinawa AMICUS International: Basic Policy for the Prevention of *Ijime*

Preface

All children possess an equal right to receive education, protected by school, home and the surrounding area, so as to be able to develop freely in pursuit of their dreams and goals for the future. *Ijime* however, in addition to being a violation of this right to receive an education, poses also the danger that not only substantial impact is made upon the healthy development and character formation of children subjected to it, but that it can become a threat to physical well-being and life itself.

In view of this the Educational Trust Amicus Kokusai Gakuen (hereafter ‘Amicus’) has, based upon the 2013 *Ijime Boushi Taisaku Suishin Hou* (hereafter ‘the law’)’s provisions per Article 12, and also the Basic Policy for the Prevention of *Ijime*, determined by the Minister for Education October 11th 2013, (hereafter the ‘National Basic Policy’) has set down a Basic Policy for the Prevention of *Ijime*, and adopted a number of mechanisms in order to prevent *ijime*, to ensure early detection, early responses and early elimination.

However, with a view to reforming those parts of the existing policy that were causing difficulties in schools, and as a new addition to reinforce areas in the existing law that were insufficient, on March 14th 2017 the Basic Policy for the Prevention of *Ijime* was revised. At Amicus, to consolidate an environment where children can study with peace of mind, and aiming to become a school where anyone can shine in pursuit of their dreams and ambitions, we sought to review our own Basic Policy for the Prevention of *Ijime*.

Through this, the promotion of a comprehensive and effective policy to combat *ijime*, and the construction of a framework to look after the children, we are seeking to realize an Amicus in which all students can develop healthily and pursue their dreams amid optimal interpersonal relationships.

I Fundamental thinking regarding *Ijime* policy

1 Core Philosophy

Ijime is something that can happen with any person in any grade or organization.

Hence based upon the shared consciousness that *ijime* is a violation of human rights and behavior that as a human being should never be tolerated, in order to prevent *ijime* before it occurs, to detect it early, to respond early and eliminate it early, in combination with the prefecture and local/regional organizations, with parents and concerned bodies in the region, we will move forward with the building of a school that is safe and secure.

2 Definition of *Ijime*

‘*Ijime*’ is used herein to mean, as per Article 2 of the law, “Behavior with physical or psychological effects, including online conduct, directed towards a child or children belonging to a school by another child or children with an ongoing personal relationship with the child or children, which causes distress to the affected child or children.

3 Acknowledgement of Ijime

The various problems arising among children and students differ according to the interpersonal relationships, the origins, the surroundings and the background situation, and individual responses to the same behavior may vary greatly. Accordingly, it is not by types of behavior that ijime is identified, but through reference to the nature of the injury felt by the child subjected to it, and ijime is to be acknowledged as being such through psychological understanding.

4 Perception of Ijime

- Ijime can occur with any child, in any grade or group.
- Ijime is a violation of human rights and is never acceptable behavior.
- Ijime often takes place where adults do not notice, and is hard to detect.
- The belief that the target of ijime is to blame is wrong.
- Ijime can manifest in ways that bring it into contact with criminal legal sanction, such as violence, extortion or coercion.
- Ijime is a problem that calls into question the mentoring and management of students by the staff of the school.
- Ijime has substantial connection with the way children are brought up at home.
- Ijime is a problem that demands that the school, parents, local authorities and all connected each perform their roles and combine in seeking its prevention and eradication.

5 Responsibilities

- The responsibilities of the school
Amicus will through educational activities as a whole strive to inculcate a spirit that has respect for life and thinks of society and the hearts of others.
Furthermore, along with daily efforts to prevent ijime, we will attain a common understanding regarding recognition of ijime, and where it is detected will respond as an organization to eliminate it.
- The responsibilities of parents and guardians
Parents and guardians will strive to cooperate in mechanisms to prevent ijime, to correctly identify ijime, and to teach the children in their care that ijime is a violation of human rights that shall not be tolerated.
They will also strive to be proactive in alerting and consulting with the school and related organizations where there is concern that ijime may be taking place.
- The responsibilities of children
Children should not engage in ijime.
Where a child is subject to ijime, or discovers ijime taking place, or is consulted regarding ijime, he or she will strive to be courageous and consult with family, school or related organizations.
- The responsibilities of local citizens
Local citizens will in addition to watching over children in their area and checking they are ok endeavor to create an environment in conjunction with local authorities where all children can feel safe.
Furthermore, local citizens should, if they discover ijime, endeavor to provide information at once to the municipality, school and related organizations.

II Implementation of Measures by Amicus

1 Formulate the Basic Policy and put structures in place

(1) Formulation of Amicus Basic Policy for Prevention of Ijime

It is Amicus where the children spend the large part of their day, and form most of their interpersonal relationships outside of family. And when one considers that almost all recognized cases of bullying occur within the context of human relationships formed at Amicus, it is clear that the role and responsibility of the school regarding prevention is enormous.

With this in mind, and based also on the provisions of Article 13 of the law, Amicus will draw up and regularly update a Basic Policy for the Prevention of Ijime that will promote efforts to comprehensively, effectively and practically prevent ijime at the school.

The Basic Policy for the Prevention of Ijime will contain within it full and specific information as to measures and activities to prevent ijime within Amicus.

It will furthermore through display on the website be made public and available to parents and local people.

(2) Installation of a body within Amicus to prevent ijime

Measures to prevent ijime are not dependent for progress upon the efforts of individual teachers. They must be conducted by Amicus acting as a whole, in conjunction with families and relevant local organizations.

With this in mind, and based also upon the provisions of Article 22 of the law, in order that the measures to prevent ijime at Amicus are effective, a body will be set up for countermeasures to prevent ijime that in addition to the teaching staff of the school contains experts in welfare and psychology such as school counsellors and school social workers and others concerned, and measures implemented to make students and parents cognizant of the existence and activities of this body.

2 Implementation of enforcement by the school

(1) Efforts for the prevention of ijime

① Prevention through the furtherance of bond-building and a sense of belonging within the school.

The school will push forward with the creation of space where all children can feel secure, a sense of self-worth and self fulfilment, and with the creation of emotional bonds whereby children can through autonomous and independent activities, and activities interacting with different age groups, feel their individual value as someone who is of help to others.

② Prevention through promotion of purposeful, systematic and continuous efforts in the school to eliminate ijime

Amicus will create a Plan to Eliminate Ijime throughout the year and aiming to eradicate the problem of ijime pursue the prevention of ijime purposefully, systematically and continuously at an organizational level.

③ Prevention through the institution of Ijime Prevention Month

Ijime Prevention Month will be fixed as October and November of each year and along with efforts to redouble the fulfillment of activities to prevent ijime proceeded with on a daily basis per the Plan to Eliminate Ijime, with establishment of soudanbako (=Help and Advice Box) and anti-ijime proclamations from student

bodies such as student government aiming to enhance awareness among students and raise autonomous and voluntary practical effectiveness, that children think for themselves about ijime, seek to prevent it, and acquire thereby the power to act individually and collectively.

(2) Efforts for the early detection of ijime

- ① Early detection through common understanding regarding the recognition of ijime.

In order to make sure that suffering is not prolonged on account of oversight and failure to recognize ijime for what it is, we will pursue common understanding of ijime through specific examples, and also seek to inform and educate parents.

- ② Early detection through a variety of efforts to not miss the signs of ijime

In Amicus, as well as building up efforts to further enhance teachers' ability to detect, from daily careful observation, conversation, regular questionnaires, daily journals, individual interviews et al., the signs of ijime that children exhibit, teachers will respond swiftly where students seek help and advice.

- ③ Early detection through efforts to make use of the observations of parents and others connected to the school

Fluctuations in friendship relations can be detected also outside of school. Information will be proactively sought from parents, guardians and others regarding how children are when coming to and from school, their after-school activities and how they are at home.

(3) Efforts to resolve ijime quickly through early responses to it

- ① Where staffs become aware of ijime, they will speedily report this to the bodies at Amicus that deal with bullying, and it will be dealt with as an organization, not by the individual alone. Moreover, with cooperation of parents, other organizations involved and specialist bodies, steps will be taken with regard to both the target(s) and perpetrator(s). It may be the case that circumstances warrant flexibility regarding the mentoring given to the children, such as avoiding the actual word 'ijime', but this does not affect its recognition as being ijime and consequent information sharing.

- ② Early response and early resolution through consolidation of frameworks for mutual cooperation across grade levels.

The school will consolidate frameworks between grade levels to enable proper guidance and advice to be given to perpetrators and support to be given to targets of ijime.

- ③ Early response and early resolution through investigation and research into the performance of policies to prevent ijime.

We will proceed with investigative research into the performance of policies to prevent ijime, the necessary particulars of how support is provided for targets of ijime, how guidance and advice is given to perpetrators, also how ijime is being handled where it is occurring online and elsewhere.

- ④ Gakuen Evaluation

School evaluations will evaluate specific efforts and results related to ijime issues based upon the Amicus Basic Policy for the Prevention of Ijime and seek improvement further to the results of that evaluation.

- ⑤ Elimination of Ijime

Where three months has passed without recurrence of ijime towards the affected student, and where that student is affirmed as no longer feeling psychological distress, the ijime will be judged to have been eliminated. However, given the possibility of it reappearing, routine careful observation will be maintained.

3. Organization to prevent ijime

「Ijime Prevention and Countermeasures Committee」

Consists of : Principal, Vice Principal, SAAM, Student Guidance Officer, Grade Rep, School Nurse

Roles : A) Formulation and review of the Basic Policy

B) Prevention of ijime

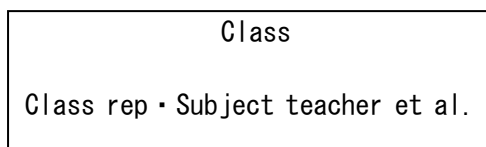
C) Responses to ijime

D) In-school PD to improve staff training with regards to ijime

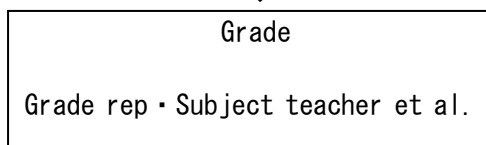
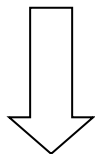
E) Emergency Response

Meets : Scheduled meeting once a month, also impromptu meetings as necessitated by emergence of ijime cases.

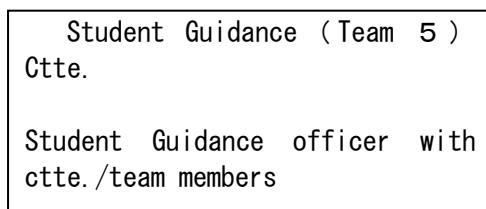
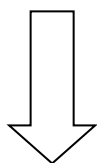
4. Flow chart and organizational structure for dealing with ijime



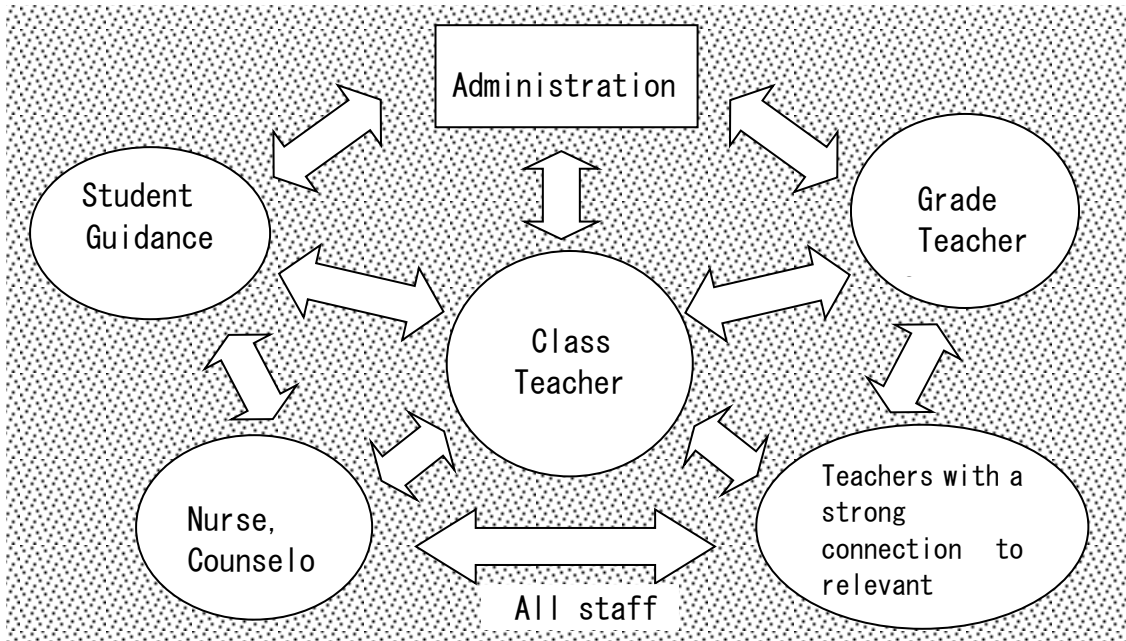
- Thorough handling at class/subject level
- Understanding children's mental health
- Conducting surveys make use of ConCare



- Thorough handling at grade/subject level
- Grade-level ijime prevention framework
- Share survey info, discuss measures



- Understanding and sharing of information throughout the school
- Ascertaining the full picture of the problematic behavior, and implementing measures to solve and prevent it
- Whole-school understanding and response
- Support framework for class teachers and grade reps.



Ijime Prevention and Countermeasures Committee
 Principal, Vice Principal, SAAM, Student Guidance Officer, Grade Rep, School Nurse, (SHinE Representative(s) and/or school counsellor as necessary)

- Formulation and review of the Basic Policy
- Prevention of ijime
- Responses seeking to eliminate ijime
- Planning of in-school PD to improve staff training regarding ijime

5. Ijime prevention year plan

	Class · Grade · Teams	Prevention Measures	Early Detection	
4月	Lectures · Class · Year Group Thorough measures	Build relationships	Survey/Questionnaire	
5月	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="border-left: 2px solid black; border-right: 2px solid black; height: 100%; width: 20px;"></div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; text-orientation: mixed; padding: 0 10px;"> Convening Ijime Countermeasures Ctte. In the event of an incident </div> <div style="border-left: 2px solid black; border-right: 2px solid black; height: 100%; width: 20px;"></div> </div>			
6月				
7月				
8月				
9月				Survey/Questionnaire
10月				
11月				
12月			Human Rights Day	
1月				Survey/Questionnaire
2月				
3月				

III Handling of serious situations

Regarding serious situations the Basic Policy and also the *Guidelines concerning investigation into serious ijime situations* (MEXT, March 2017)) will be applied as appropriate.

1 Definition of Serious Ijime Situation

- This occurs where there is suspicion that serious harm to life, health or property has occurred from ijime; the following are examples that would be in this category.
 - e.g. Student has attempted suicide
 - Student has suffered serious physical injury
 - Student has suffered substantial loss of possessions
 - A psychological disorder has manifested itself
- Where it is recognized that there is a suspicion that a student has been forced to miss a substantial amount of school on account of ijime
 - A substantial amount of missed school would be 30 days in a year, bearing in mind the definition of school absenteeism. However, if a student is continuously absent for a specific period, immediate investigation will commence.
 - Furthermore, where notification is received from a child or parent/guardian that serious ijime is occurring, from that point onwards Amicus shall, even if bullying is not thought to be the cause, or prima facie that the situation is not one to be categorized as serious, investigate and report as per a serious ijime situation.

2 Investigation and responses to an occurrence

- (1) Response to occurrence of a serious ijime situation
 - Amicus will report the occurrence of a serious ijime situation to parent/guardian(s), the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors.
 - The bodies to investigate serious ijime situations are Amicus, the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees. Which body will be in charge will be determined by the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors based upon the handling necessary, the demands of the parent/guardian(s) and the presence or absence of impediment to the educational activity of the school.
 - Where the main body investigating is the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors, these will be, as noted above, the Amicus Ijime Policy Committee, the organization which investigates, as determined by Article 28 of the law.
 - Where the main body investigating is the school itself, the school shall be the organization for policies towards ijime based on Article 22 of the law. In this case, based upon clause 3 of Article 28 of the law, the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors will provide appropriate support and necessary guidance to Amicus as it implements investigation.
- (2) Implementation of investigation
 - Where it is possible to interview the target of the ijime
 - Investigation both by questionnaire and interview will be conducted for the affected student and in some cases other students at the school and/or staff.
 - During such investigations utmost priority will be given to the protection of the target of the ijime and to students who have provided information.
 - Where it is not possible to interview the target of the ijime
 - Where it is not possible to hear from the targeted student owing to

hospitalization, death or similar, the investigation will commence asking what the wishes and opinions of the parents are and prompt consultation had with them regarding the course of the investigation.

○ Where suicide has resulted

For investigations in cases that have led to suicide, reference will be made to the MEXT *Guiding Principles for Investigating Student Suicide* (March 2011, issued by the Meeting Group for Cooperation in Research and Investigation Related to Child Suicide) and the *Things Teachers Need to Know about Child Suicide Prevention* (March 2009, published by MEXT).

3 Handling of Findings of Investigations

Amicus will report findings to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors.

If based upon the findings of the investigation either the subject of the ijime or his/her parents/guardians so wish, Amicus shall accept written submission of the observations of the subject of the ijime or his/her parents or guardians, and produce and report the results of the investigation.

Furthermore, in accordance with the responsibility to provide the facts and other necessary related information to the subject of the ijime or his/her parents or guardians, the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors, or Amicus, will make clear what the facts of the investigation are and explain this to the subject of the ijime or his/her parents or guardians.

In providing this information, full care and consideration to the privacy of other students and the personal data of third parties will be given in providing it appropriately.

4 Re-investigating and the handling of findings

The Board of Trustees and Board of Directors having received from Amicus a report of the findings of an investigation, where it is recognized that there is a need to in order to prevent the occurrence of similar serious situations or for coping with the serious situation that is the subject of the report, will in accordance with Clause 1 of Article 28 of the law conduct an investigation (hereafter 're-investigation') regarding the findings of the (initial) investigation.

The re-investigation will be conducted by the Amicus Problem Re-investigation Committee.

Being conscious of the responsibility to provide appropriate information to the subject of the ijime or his/her parents or guardians regarding the reinvestigation, information about the progress of the investigation and its findings will be explained at appropriate times and in an appropriate manner.

Furthermore, the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors, based upon the findings of the re-investigation will take the necessary measures within their authority and responsibility to provide focused support to Amicus such as deployment of a school counsellor to prevent outbreaks of a similar nature occurring and to deal with the case under investigation.

The Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors will also when conducting a re-investigation give full necessary consideration to maintaining the privacy of individuals and report the findings to the Parents' Association

IV Other important considerations for measures for the prevention of ijime

The Board of Trustees and Board of Directors, taking into consideration the situation regarding law enforcement, will consider review of the Basic Policy in the Amicus Ijime Countermeasures Communication and Consultation Committee and if considered necessary will take necessary action based upon the results of this.

Specific Measures in relation to Ijime

(1) Preventive Measures

- ① Promote classrooms wherein children care for their peers, respect one another and develop together.
- ② Strive in class to recognize children's efforts and nurture their sense of self-worth.
- ③ Through educational activities as a whole seek to fully educate regarding morality and human rights, and move forward with classes that foster consideration for others and the preciousness of life.
- ④ Move forward with moral information education to deepen understanding among children of correct behavior online, and provide ongoing guidance to enable them to avoid being either the target or perpetrator of online ijime.

(2) Measures for Early Detection

- ① Regular educational counselling based on questionnaires and all efforts made not to overlook small signs the students might show.
- ② Efforts to build warm bonds between teachers and students, and relationships of trust with parents/guardians, to ensure the maintenance of an environment wherein consultation can easily take place.
- ③ Through promoting awareness of the school counsellor, and introduction of external consultation services like ijime hotlines, provide and maintain an environment where students can seek advice easily.

(3) Measures against ijime

- ① Respond as an organization with the Ijime Countermeasures Committee taking the lead whenever ijime is discovered or reported.
- ② Respond from the position of allowing no harm to come to the targeted student.
- ③ Support and guide the perpetrator(s) firmly and based upon educational considerations.
- ④ Handle the situation with shared understanding among staff, cooperation with parents and guardians and in concert with the school counsellor and other experts, the police, children's consultation office and other related organisations
- ⑤ Speak to groups where ijime has happened, and promote and encourage groups where ijime does not go unnoticed, and does not occur.
- ⑥ For dealing with online cases, act where necessary in concert with the police, the Legal Affairs Bureau and similar bodies.

6. Handling of Serious Situations

- (1) A serious situation is one determined to be so by the Principal, being one where it can be suspected that serious damage to the life, physical or mental well-being or property of a student has occurred.

(2) In addition to immediately notifying the prefecture, the Principal will take charge and the school will take the lead in responding to the situation.

(3) When it is the school conducting the investigation into the facts, the Ijime Countermeasures Committee will be convened and specialists added as appropriate in response to the facts.

(4) Information will be provided in an appropriate manner to the child and parents/guardians regarding the results of the investigation.

7. Verification and Review of the School's Steps Taken

(1) The steps taken to prevent ijime, beginning with the Basic Policy For the Prevention of Ijime, will be reviewed with a PDCA cycle and every effort made to ensure they are effective.

(2) Evaluation by teaching staff of particulars regarding ijime, and school evaluation questionnaires for parents, will be conducted and validation of the measures taken in relation to ijime made by the Ijime Countermeasures Committee.