

Anti-Bullying Policy

Rationale

In Scoil Réalt na Mara Ballycotton we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a safe and caring environment. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Scoil Réalt na Mara Ballycotton has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's Code of Behaviour. The policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

Key Principles

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- a positive school culture and climate
- Effective leadership
- A school-wide approach
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- Identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message (or any other private messaging) do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The class teacher: the class teacher deals with the initial allegation/suspicion of bullying behaviour
- The principal: where bullying behaviour is suspected by the class teacher, the principal should be informed.

Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- an awareness on the part of the staff of the extremely serious nature of bullying and the severe consequences that may result in situations where it is not addressed
- A recognition by the staff of the fact that any student can be the victim of, or perpetrator of bullying behaviour
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times, including explicitly teaching pupils respectful language and respectful behaviour, and tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school
- Display key messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school, and involve pupils in the development of these messages
- "Catch them being good" - notice and acknowledge respectful behaviour
- Giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful language and behaviour are absent
- We have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- explicitly teach pupils about social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve the parents and/or the Parents' Council in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school
- Explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language

- We will raise pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, taking particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or SEN,
- We will use elements of the SPHE curriculum which make specific provision for exploring bullying. We use the Stay Safe programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. We also use the Walk Tall Programme, Weaving Well Being, Zones of Regulation, the Zippy's Friends programme, Grow in Love and we are an active health promoting school. Our work extends into many other areas including Drama, Art, Religious Education and Physical Education.
- Good supervisory and monitoring procedures are in place to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour. Currently we will have staggered breaks with two supervising adults.
- The Board of Management will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy.
- Consistent investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour (including the use of established intervention strategies).
- Individual teachers may use systems such as praising appropriate behaviour, star charts, traffic lights, table points systems, golden time, class dojo.

Procedures for Investigation, follow-up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour

The class teacher will have primary responsibility for investigating alleged cases of bullying. However, dependent on the seriousness of the actions involved, the class teacher may decide to involve the Principal in accordance with our Code of Behaviour.

Where an alleged incident of bullying involves students from a number of classes, the class teacher will liaise with the Principal to carry out the investigation. The primary aim will be to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way, pupils will gain confidence in "telling". This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff including secretaries, SNAs and cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support for their pupils
- Where the class teacher has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be made clear to the pupil(s) how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
- If appropriate, follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- In cases where the class teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the class teacher in the recording template.

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 1. whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 2. whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 3. whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
 4. feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the Principal, or Deputy Principal
- where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures (Appendix 1). If a parent has exhausted these complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

All records will be maintained in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher will use the appropriate template to record the bullying behaviour in circumstances where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been resolved within 20 school days of the initial investigation. This will be reported immediately to the Principal.

Referral of serious cases to the HSE

Instances of bullying will be dealt with in tandem with the overall Code of Behaviour. In cases where the school has serious concerns about managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought. Serious or abusive instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Social Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

Where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Service.

Supports for pupils

A programme of support for pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. The school's programme includes:

- opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, and to develop friendship and social skills (SPHE programme)
- encouraging friendships
- close monitoring of pupils on the yard
- on-going follow up meetings with students in relation to incidents of bullying
- pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers

Supervision & monitoring of pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible

Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified, i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Ratification and implementation

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. The implementation and effectiveness of the policy will be included as an agenda item for staff meetings. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Council. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested to the patron and the Department.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15.9.21

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)

Appendix 1: Parental Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management, except where those complaints are deemed by the Board to be:

1. On matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education
2. Frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school
3. Complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedures. Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher he/she should approach the principal teacher with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the Board of Management.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the Board to be required:

- (a) supply the teacher with a written copy of the complaint

(b) arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher, with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting referred to above.

2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.

3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:

(a) the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage

(b) the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint

(c) the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint

(d) the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.

(e) the Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting

(f) the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to previously.

Stage 5

When the Board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board.

The decision of the Board shall be final.

This Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.

CPSMA or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party 3 months' notice of intention to do so.

Appendix 2 - Template for recording Incidents of Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: _____ Class: _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incident(s)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5. Name of person who reported the bullying concern:

6. Type of bullying behaviour:

Physical aggression	Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property	Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion	Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling	Other (please specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix: Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

Name of pupil being bullied: _____ Class group: _____

Name and classes of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour:

Source of bullying concern

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

Location of incident(s)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

Type of bullying behaviour

Physical aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name calling		Other (please specify)	

Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact

Details of action(s) taken

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Date submitted to Principal: _____