

Aughadreena National School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. 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 Aughadreena National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013, the school's Code of Behaviour and The Teaching Council's Code of Conduct for Teachers.

2. 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 fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:
 - A positive school culture and climate which-
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
 - 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;
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic 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); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. 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 and

- identity-based bullying such as homophobic and transphobic 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 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*.

What are the signs of bullying?

- Anxiety about coming to school
- Poor performance in school
- Unwilling to attend school
- Pattern of physical illness
- Changes in mood / behaviour
- Visible sign of distress / anxiety
- Possessions missing
- Requests for extra money
- Bruising
- Unwilling to explain what is troubling him / her

What is Cyber-Bullying?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

- Text messages – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using blue tooth wireless technology)
- Picture / video-clips via mobile phone cameras – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
- Mobile phone calls – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible
- Emails – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name
- Chat from bullying – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room

- Instant messaging (IM) – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online
 - Bullying via websites – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal ‘own web space’ sites.
4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying in the school is firstly the class teacher, who will investigate and deal with bullying concerning pupils from his/her class. The Principal teacher will be informed of all incidents of alleged bullying by the class teacher.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies that will be used by the School

- The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The Stay Safe Programme is taught to all pupils in the school. It is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children’s self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying
- There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English there is a wide range of literature available which can be used to stimulate discussion. This work can be extended to other subject areas such as religion and drama.
- Teachers have a role to play in the promotion of a *positive self-concept* in pupils. This can be achieved, for example, by : rewarding effort as well as success, using praise in a meaningful way; giving responsibility; asking for opinions; requesting assistance; avoiding communications that are belittling.
- Effective classroom discipline is an essential component to effective bullying prevention.
- Team Teaching is used in the school and this is a means of opening pupils’ eyes to accepting more than one opinion and to acting more cooperatively with others. The cooperation that the pupils observe between team teachers serves as a model for teaching the pupils positive teamwork skills and attitudes.
- Teaching strategies are important as a teaching style that makes use of cooperative learning structures that can help to increase levels of acceptance of and respect for other pupils.
- Other effective activities for pupils used in the school include discussions about bullying, drama activities, written activities, cooperative games and circle time.
- Appropriate supervision and monitoring is provided to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour. During break and lunch time one teacher and the SNA’s supervise the children. At 3:00 pm the children disperse in an orderly manner and leave through their allocated door. Teachers ensure an orderly dismissal and that all classrooms are vacated at this time. The Board of Management accepts no responsibility for pupils before 9:10 am. Parents are asked not to leave their children at the school before 9:10 am.

6.1 The school's Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The school has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying which are set out in this policy.

- (i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- (ii) Each teacher will record any serious incident of negative behaviour within the classroom. If a pattern of bullying emerges then this will be dealt with by the class teacher with the help of the principal if necessary;
- (iii) The teacher supervising the yard will inform the class teacher of any incident of intentional negative behaviour from one of his/her class pupils and record the details of the incident in the Yard book. This will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Code of Behaviour. It is important to remember that intentional negative behaviour may not be the same as bullying;
- (iv) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- (v) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In this 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;
- (vi) Non-teaching staff such as our secretary or special needs assistant (SNA) (if employed in the school), must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (vii) 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;
- (viii) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (ix) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (x) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (xi) All interviews should 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;

- (xii) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should 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;
- (xiii) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- (xiv) Each member of a group should be individually supported throughout any possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xv) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (xvi) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should 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 should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- (xvii) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- (xviii) It must 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;
- (xix) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- (xx) In cases where the relevant 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 relevant teacher in the recording template;
- (xxi) 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:
 - o Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - o Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;

- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal
- (xxii) 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;
- (xxiii) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

6.2 The School's Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour

The school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these are documented in this policy. All records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour adheres to the following:

- (i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, 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;
- (ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must 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.
- (iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template (Appendix 3 of *The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*) to record the bullying behaviour in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

In the above circumstance, the recording template must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

6.3 Referral of Serious Cases to the HSE

In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardai as appropriate.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

7. Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be put in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. In order to build self-esteem, some pupils may be invited to assist in the organisation of, or participate in extra-curricular activities. If the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying should be encouraged to discuss them with their class teacher.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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

9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 13-10-2021.

11. This policy has been made available to all school personnel and parents. The policy is readily accessible to pupils and parents on request. A copy has been given to the school's Parent / Teacher Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and to the DES.

Signed: Julie Fay
(Chairperson Board of Management)

Date: 13/10/21