



# 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 (National Education Welfare Board), the Board of Management of Rathmichael 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.
  
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; and
    - 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 (See Page 5) (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 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 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*.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

Normally the Class teacher(s) of person(s) involved and/or the school Principal. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school or to the Principal. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with this policy. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant.

**Note:** Temporary/Substitute teachers who are teaching at the school for very short periods (generally less than one month) will be made aware that any behaviour which may be deemed to be bullying behaviour should be brought immediately to the attention of the Principal or, in the Principal's absence, another permanent member of the teaching staff. Teachers in longer temporary posts will be given a copy of this

policy and will take part in monthly staff meetings where anti-bullying is an agenda item.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:
  - 'Bullying' will be a subject for discussion under Child Protection at Staff meetings. Suggestions for preventing bullying will be invited and agreed steps implemented. Staff will share information on any issues which may be arising at class level and discuss what preventative measures might be put in place.
  - A high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness will be observed to ensure that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled.
  - A positive school-wide attitude of involvement to assist in countering bullying behavior will be maintained.
  - Teachers will, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
  - Occasionally as a preventative measure we may invite outside groups to address class/es on bullying and its affects.
  - Various types of bullying including cyberbullying and homophobia will be addressed during SPHE. (Social Personal Health Education)
  - As part of the drama curriculum we will include dramas about bullying and address the issues in SPHE.
  - Competitions may be held to illustrate and design posters promoting anti-bullying. Selected entires will be displayed in prominent places throughout the school.
  - At assemblies anti-bullying will be addressed using stories and songs.
  - Through effective leadership, supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates difference. The role of all those in leadership roles (B Posts) within the school is of great importance in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying.
  - Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), sports co-ordinators, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners, as well as school traffic wardens, local shopkeepers and the like are encouraged to play a positive role in assisting schools to counter bullying behaviour and report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
  - Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs) include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.
  - School-wide approach to fostering an attitude of respect for all, promoting the value of diversity, addressing prejudice and stereotyping, and highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
  - Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to

be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

- The school's anti-bullying policy is brought to the attention of parents each year in a newsletter.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Ensuring as part of SPHE curriculum that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - Availability in classrooms of a box for notes about worries or concerns
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- It is protocol to hold at the beginning of each school year whole class meetings with parents, during which the teacher encourages parents to approach them in person or on the telephone if they develop any concerns about bullying or suspected bullying.
- The school maintains an Acceptable Use Policy which includes the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.
- Other school policies, practices and activities assist in discouraging bullying behavior, such as Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Attendance, Sports and Games. The Code of Behaviour itself specifically addresses the issue of cyber-bullying in and connected with school.

### **Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying**

6. The primary aim 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).

### **Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, sports co-ordinators, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

**The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:**

- 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;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, sports co-ordinators, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners shall be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- A restorative approach is the preferred intervention.
- 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 should 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 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- Those involved may be asked to write down their account/s of the incident(s) if it is considered that this would be helpful;
- 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;

- 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;
- 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;

### **Follow-up and Recording**

- 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:
  - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
  - 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 or Deputy Principal;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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.

### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

Recording of bullying incidents shall be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

#### **Informal - pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

### **Formal Stage 1 - determination that bullying has occurred**

- 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.
- Notes and general records of bullying issues will be kept by the relevant teacher and or the Principal in designated files/notebooks

### **Formal Stage 2 – Recording Template – DES (Department of Education and Skills)**

- 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. (Appendix 1 to this policy)
- When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. These records will be kept in the school office and/or the Principal's office. Records will be maintained for at least 7 years after all parties have left the school.
- 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 or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

At least once in every school term the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the number of cases reported by means of the Recording Template since the last report to the Board, including confirmation that all such cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

### **Established intervention strategies available at the various stages**

- Restorative approach
- Verbal warning
- Verbal agreement
- Detention/suspension or other appropriate consequences
- Parents/guardians informed
- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given
- External Referral
- Contact with other support agencies, e.g. NEPS (National Educational Psychologist Services)

- Board of Management referral

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

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

A programme of support for pupils who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those low in self-esteem opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Learning strategies employed within the school will allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

The school's programme for working with pupils affected by bullying comprises the following:

- Pastoral Care System.
- Through subjects like SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), Drama and English children can be taught to build their self-esteem and self-worth.
- Through these subjects the difficulties which have presented themselves can be addressed
- Teachers can continue to monitor both parties closely to ensure issues do not recur.
- Communication with parents can continue to ensure child/children are well.
- Buddy/Peer-mentoring system
- Group work such as Circle Time.

## **8. Supervision and 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.

## **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 **25th January 2023**
  
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.
  
12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year using the Checklist contained in Appendix 2 of this policy (Appendix 4 of the DES's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.) Written notification, in the form prescribed in Appendix 3 of this policy, that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: 25th January 2023

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