

Anti-Bullying Policy



'A Place for Everyone'

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ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Background

The school's anti-bullying policy was reviewed during the school year 2013/14, following receipt of DES Circular 0045/2013 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools'. The ISPCC 'Shield my School' tool and information contained in the DES circular provided assistance in this regard. It was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 04 March 2014.

1. Introduction

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 Mhuire na nGrást, Belgooly 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. Principles of Best Practice

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;
- Encouragement of pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- Promotion of respectful relationships across the school community
- Effective leadership
- A school-wide approach to preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour
- 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 which explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based 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. 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
- ✚ Name calling which extends to very personal remarks, aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation
- ✚ Physical aggression
- ✚ Intimidation
- ✚ Damage to property
- ✚ Extortion

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, while they do not fall within the definition of bullying, will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with our 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. In this regard, the best

parental control, when it comes to internet and mobile technology usage and safety (i.e. all related internet usage and mobile technology), is parental involvement and monitoring.

While every possible anti-bullying measure will be availed of by the school in terms of prevention and creating awareness, it is hoped that this will equip pupils with the skills to recognise bullying behaviour and to report on a related matter to a teacher, parent, community club/organisation member or other responsible adult. Pupils are encouraged to tell. Working together, the school will investigate, where appropriate, offer advice, support and provide direction, as necessary and where appropriate.

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

4. Investigating Bullying

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

- Class teachers (Junior Infants – 6th)
- Support teachers (Learning support/Resource)
- Principal & Deputy Principal

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

Education and Prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- ✚ As this is a Catholic school, an important emphasis will be placed on the spiritual aspect of our lives and our modelling of Christian behaviour with others. The school's committed participation in the *Catholic Schools Partnership* process aims to facilitate school reflection in terms of ethos through affirming the good work that is characteristic of the school and to develop new ways of giving expression to the school's Catholic identity. The Alive-O programme is used throughout the school to support the teaching of religion. Various school and wider community events celebrate the school's Catholic ethos and prompts an understanding of social justice e.g. sacramental celebrations, Christmas concerts, annual Catholic Schools Week, assemblies in school hall, charitable events (e.g. annual 'Bring & Buy', Farmers Market)
- ✚ The school's Code of Behaviour emphasises the importance of affirming positive behaviour through frequent feedback. A greater emphasis is place on rewards and incentives than on sanctions

- ✚ Each class devise classroom rules/guidelines at the beginning of each school year which promote inclusion, acceptance of difference and respect for one another
- ✚ Weekly/Monthly/Yearly themed events are organised to highlight and celebrate positive behaviour and whole school community cohesion e.g. Manners Matters Month, Friendship Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Science Day, World Book Day, Lá na gCrann, School Sports Day
- ✚ The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, with many related extra-curricular activities, which is inclusive, engaging and motivating for pupils e.g. Environmental, the Arts, Sport, Science & Technology
- ✚ Promotion of pupil self-esteem through highlighting achievements, both academic and non-academic, inside and after school, will take place throughout the school year e.g. Scór, Credit Union Quiz, Sporting fixtures, Athletics, School Garden, Belgooly Show
- ✚ Opportunities are sought across the curriculum, and in particular in the area of SPHE, and school life to help the pupils develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolutions skills. Programmes such as *SALT (Stop, Ask, Listen & Talk)*, *RSE (Relationships & Sexuality Education)*, *Walk Tall & Stay Safe* will be used to promote positive behaviour
- ✚ Opportunities for curricular integration and cross-curricular approaches will be used where appropriate to foster a wider understanding of the positive and negative effects of behaviour. Literacy opportunities will be availed of to draw attention to cause and effect of conflict, which can be reinforced in SPHE and SESE lessons as appropriate
- ✚ Dedicated Arts Workshops to promote pupil well-being and to further enhance whole school community links e.g. creative movement, drumming
- ✚ There is a balance between free play and organised activities during break times which promote the development of pupils' social skills. Play areas are segregated on the basis of age/classes. To provide an opportunity for variety, play areas are rotated. Senior class pupils adopt 'buddy' roles in assisting infant pupils in learning playground yard games, thus developing social skills
- ✚ All pupils will be encouraged to develop empathy and respect for other pupils and to understand the causes and effects of bullying behaviours
- ✚ For infant classes, education and prevention strategies will focus on positive behaviour, being kind to others and telling teacher or other school staff if any problems or worries arise in school. Inputs from programmes such as the 'Stay Safe' Programme and the Religious Education programme will complement this approach.
- ✚ Visual cues will reinforce anti-bullying and positive behavioural messages delivered in class – commercial posters, pupil-designed posters,

art, essays or pupil commentaries on anti-bullying workshops. These will be displayed around the school.

- ✚ Age-appropriate classroom library books will be purchased to foster respect for differences; being kind to others; understanding the effect that bullying behaviour can have on others
- ✚ In order to prevent opportunities for cyber-bullying, mobile phones/smart phones will be switched off while on the school premises/grounds and during all school related activities. Mobile phones are given to class teacher in the morning and collected before leaving school.
- ✚ Educational awareness measures aimed at senior classes and which focus on cyberbullying, will focus on discussion of appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and on reporting any concerns to a trusted adult in school. For the benefit of senior pupils, parents and the wider community, the school organises related information sessions/workshops e.g. Barnardos internet safety talk, community garda talk/Clontead Community Alert
- ✚ Where the opportunity arises, guest speakers with an expertise in bullying prevention, or a particularly area of bullying prevention, will be invited to address pupils, staff and parents
- ✚ Fostering a school culture which is respectful of all differences, including children with special education needs (SEN), will incorporate social inclusion measures to prevent isolation and encourage integration, developing social skills of SEN pupils and reinforce and reward good behaviour in all pupils

6. Procedures for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour

(i) Claims of bullying of a pupil must be brought, in the first instance, to the relevant class teacher. If another pupil in the school is involved, 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); if the bullying is being carried out on a pupil by someone outside the school (e.g. in a cyberbullying context), and it is having an impact in school, the relevant class teacher must be notified and he/she will discuss the matter with a relevant staff member/s to arrange for appropriate supports for that pupil.

(ii) 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;

(iii) 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;

(iv) Other school personnel (e.g. SNA's, School Secretary, Visiting Specialist teachers, Student Teachers) will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

(v) 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;

(vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the approach outlined at (i) to (v) above, from the outset;

(vii) Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

(viii) Incidents will be investigated while taking measures to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) 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 and may be asked for their version of events.

(x) 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;

(xi) If a group is involved, each member will, where practicable, 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 her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

(xii) The group will be supported, if necessary, through the possible pressures that they may face after interview, by the teacher;

(xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s); this will be done at the teacher's discretion and taking pupil ages into account

(xiv) 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. 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 supports for their pupils;

(xv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

- (xvi) 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, their parents and the school;
- (xvii) 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. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- (xviii) 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 will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix A**
- (xix) 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;
- (xx) 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;
- (xxi) 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.

7. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

- (i) Pupils will be made aware that reporting an incident of bullying is responsible behaviour.
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records (Incident Form) which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

- (iv) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix A** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) 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

In the circumstance of (a) above, the recording template at **Appendix A** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix A** 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.

8. Programme of support for pupils

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying will include the following:-

- ✚ Consultation with the pupil and his/her parent/s as to what type of school support would help, for example:-
 - Individual discussion with class teacher and/or with a relevant staff member/s
 - Individual 'time-out' from class to complete activities of the pupil's choice (e.g. art, music, ICT)
 - Small group work with friends in the Resource room setting
 - Use of circle time by the class teacher or relevant staff member/s
 - Situational drama, social or pictorial stories in a class or group setting
 - Focused workshop for the whole class

In the case of children for whom bullying is having a serious impact which cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in school, consultation will be made with the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) as to whether formal referral to an outside, specialist agency (e.g. CAMHS) may be necessary in order to support the pupil concerned.

The school will also offer support for pupils who are bullying others, following consultation with parent/s. The options outlined above will be made available in such cases.

A relevant staff member/s will also make arrangements for support for parents who need help in this area (for example, organisation of an Information Evening for Parents; lists of specialist agencies to whom referrals could be made etc.)

9. Supports for parents

Parents who wish to discuss their child's difficulties in relation to bullying will be facilitated to meet on a one to one basis with the child's teacher, or with a relevant staff member/s. Any parental suggestions for appropriate supports for their child in the school setting, will be considered and implemented, as far as practicable, within school.

Any parent who considers that their child's mental health is being affected by bullying, and is having a seriously detrimental effect on their child, should also contact their own GP for referral, if necessary, to the HSE's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Support and advice for parents and their child may also be available through local professional, accredited counsellors and psychotherapists, specialist organisations and support services. Many websites also provide information for parents to help their child in relation to bullying.

Details of these services are contained in Appendix D.

10. Supports for staff

The Board of Management will ensure that members of the school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school's anti-bullying policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required. Supports for staff will be appropriate to the individual's role and will enable staff to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and, where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.

Staff will be facilitated by the Board of Management to update skills on a regular basis in relation to bullying and its impact on pupils, and where approved in advance by the Board, funding will be made available for members of staff to attend training in specific areas at various centres or as part of whole school training.

11. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring practices and policies are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible. Supervision is not provided by school staff on bus transport to and from school, however, pupils are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying to their

parents/guardians and/or the relevant teacher. Bus Eireann will be notified in relation to same.

Although it is not physically possible for staff to supervise and monitor all pupils at every minute of the school day, 'hot spots' - where opportunities for bullying can occur- have been identified -

- In toilets
- On buses
- In the playground
- Group work
- School hall

Supervision and monitoring practices will take account of these areas and staff will be vigilant so that opportunities for bullying will be minimised.

12. 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 an ethnic grouping or of the Traveller community.

13. Ongoing evaluation of the Policy

The effectiveness of the school's Anti-Bullying policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered.

The school will make provision for periodic examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place. Surveys of pupils, staff and parents may be used to provide information and feedback about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place and identify any significant behavioural trends that may benefit from early intervention.

The implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will be regularly included as an item at staff meetings so as to ensure that concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

Data gathered from Bullying Reports completed by relevant teachers (Appendix A), will be analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any

significant trends in behaviour. Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented by staff.

Furthermore, at least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- (i) the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at **Appendix A**) since the previous report to the Board and
- (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the above but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

14. Referral of cases to outside authorities

In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

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 will, 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 Gardaí 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.

Any such referrals or consultations with NEPS or HSE, in the context of this Anti-Bullying Policy, will be notified to the Board of Management by the Principal as part of regular reporting on Child Protection issues, which is on the agenda of each Board meeting.

15. Review of Policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. 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' Association. The review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

16. Availability of Policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on Tuesday, 04 March 2014.

Signed: D Kelly
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: D Hennessy
(Principal)

Date: 04/03/2014

Date of next review: March 2015

Appendix A

Template for recording bullying behaviour
(as contained in DES Circular 0045/2013)

APPENDIX B

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation
(Board of Management)

(as contained in DES Circular 0045/2013)

APPENDIX C

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

(as contained in DES Circular 0045/2013)

APPENDIX D

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR PARENTS

WEBSITE	CONTACT NO.	GENERAL INFORMATION
www.dcu.ie/abc	01-7006580	The Anti-Bullying Centre in Trinity College, Dublin, gives advice and guidance to parents in relation to bullying
www.npc.ie	Helpline 01-8874477	National Parents council – provides support, including training on Anti-Bullying, to parents
www.corkmentalhealth.com	021-4511100	Offers advice about mental health, including leaflets for adolescents
www.socialandhealth@eircom.net	021-4666180	Coiscéim – offers affordable counselling in the locality
www.barnardos.ie	1850 222300	Barnardos is a family support agency. Its website contains advice in relation to bullying and parenting
www.iacp.ie	01-2723427	Provides lists of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists