

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 Naomh Seosamh, Laragh 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. KEY PRINCIPLES AND 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; which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and which 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 (including use of established intervention strategies).
- 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 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. RELEVANT TEACHERS FOR INVESTIGATING BULLYING

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". At primary level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher. All teachers can act as the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying, with the principal or deputy principal acting as a guide for the process.

5. EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

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

- A positive school culture and climate is established through the cooperation between teachers, pupils, parents, and staff.
- Staff model right behaviour through the maintenance of positive relationships among staff and with the pupils of the school.
- Continuous Professional Development for Staff.
- Visitors such as Garda and internet safety experts talk to the classes.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti-bullying policy. Programmes such as Fun Friends and Friends 4 Life are also implemented.
- The patron's programme of Religious Education considers core values and moral development as well as addressing the rights and responsibilities of individuals and promoting equality and justice.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying and children are encouraged to speak out when they witness any bullying behaviour. Staff take any concerns seriously. All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive, respectful behaviour and speech both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others and by promptly communicating concerns to the school.
- Bullying behaviour is approached from a school wide perspective, with a consistent message that bullying behaviour is not tolerated. A culture of telling when such behaviour occurs is firmly established.

6. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATION, FOLLOW UP AND RECORDING

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:

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).

Pupil or parent brings bullying concern to a teacher.

Non-teaching staff such as secretary, SNAs etc. will report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to a relevant teacher.

All reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying that they are acting responsibly.

In investigating and dealing with accusations of bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and to decide how best the situation might be resolved.

Parents and pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. It is important that all involved (including all pupils and parents) understand that this is a restorative rather than a punitive approach.

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 investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

All interviews are 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. It is advisable to have two members of staff present for any interviews whenever practical. Written records of all conversations should be kept, with the date and time of the conversation noted.

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 of dealing 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. When appropriate 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.

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to this Code of Behaviour). The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for 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 s/he has been in breach of this 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 will 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 sanctioned, his or her parents and the school.

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged.

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 relationship between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable and
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the Principal or the Deputy Principal

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 3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*)

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with this Anti-Bullying Policy, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaint procedure.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedure and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere 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 will use the recording template at (Appendix 3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) 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: and
- b) where it is determined, in serious cases, that the bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

(iv) In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template 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 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.

Intervention Strategies

- 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) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing

7. PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying will be implemented and based on the ideas of Restorative Justice. While sanctions may be used as specified in this Code of Behaviour, the general focus of response to bullying behaviour is one of trying to mend and restore relationship as well as to encourage children to speak out when they experience bullying behaviour.

The Principal and the relevant teacher will work together to ensure that both parties engage in activities that promote the restoration of positive relationships. This may take the form of circle time or conversations facilitated by teachers. The purpose of any such activities will be to ensure each party understands the consequences of their actions for themselves and for others.

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. The Principal will make regular reports to Board of Management meetings regarding the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

9. PREVENTION OF HARRASSMENT

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.

Review

This policy was reviewed and updated by the Board of Management in November 2021.

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 and published on the school website. . A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Nelius McCarthy _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: ____22 Nov 2021_____

Signed: _____ John Lordan _____

(Principal)

Date: ____22 Nov 2021____