

# Gaelscoil an Inbhir Mhóir

## Anti-Bullying Policy

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 **Gaelscoil an Inbhir Mhóir** 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 Primary and Post-Primary Schools for which were published in September 2013.

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.
- 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).
- Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- Address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and trans-phobic bullying on an age appropriate level.
- 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.

### **1. 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*.**

## **2. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows**

- All Class teachers
- Resource teachers
- Learning support teachers
- Principal teacher

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and /or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent or a friend. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the Principal.

## **3. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying, homophobic and trans-phobic bullying) that will be used by our school are**

- A school-wide approach to the development of respect for all members of the school community and fostering a culture that is welcoming of inclusivity and diversity.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The self-esteem of all our pupils will be developed through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions. Strengths will be highlighted.

- Whole staff will be familiar with this Anti-Bullying Policy to enable them to implement it effectively and consistently. All staff will develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it.
- School wide awareness-raising on all aspects of bullying will take place at assemblies and referred to in newsletters.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff should also contribute and be part of the process and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Encourage a culture of helping each other among pupils through a **Buddy System**; older children organising games for younger ones ; mixed ability group activities; SEN pupils included ; improvement of social skills through games and teacher direction.
- Teachers can influence attitudes by discussing incidents in formal and informal instruction.....what do you think of that action... was there a better option? Issues of exclusion, conflict, friendship, safety.....could easily be developed
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in reporting. 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 that pupils know who to tell and 'how to tell.'
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes if deemed necessary.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programme. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- See also.....Code of behaviour, Cyber Bullying Policy.
- The school's prevention and awareness measures will be appropriate to the type of bullying and take into account the age and gender of the pupils involved

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

- The teacher investigating will use his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how the situation may be best resolved. All reports of bullying must be investigated with sensitivity by the teacher dealing with the incident.

- The aim is to resolve and restore good relationships between all parties rather than apportion blame.
- We will endeavour to help pupils understand that reporting bullying incidents is not “telling tales” but is responsible behaviour.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated by the relevant teacher.
- Pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Recording of bullying behaviour (adhere to section 6.8.10)
- Informal pre-determination that bullying has occurred.
- 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.
- Formal Stage 2 – ‘Appendix 3’.
- The relevant teacher shall use the recording template at **Appendix 3** 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.
- When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal.
- Intervention strategies in use at this school.
- Teacher/pupil interviews where the teacher endeavours to get a clear version of the incident. If a group is involved it may be necessary to interview the children individually at first, then as a group to arrive at a true picture of events. During all investigations the teacher will remain calm and unemotional. They will use a series of questions such as, What? When?
- Home/school communication. Where it has been determined that bullying has taken place the parents /guardians of the children involved will be contacted. They will be informed of what has taken place and will discuss what disciplinary actions may now occur. (Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions.)
- 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.)
- Circle Time.

## **5. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows**

- (see Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):
- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g. pastoral care system, buddy/peer mentoring system, group work (such as Circle Time.)
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or the pupil involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

## **6. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

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

## **7. 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.

## **This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2014.**

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

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 Parent-Teacher Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.