

*Scoil an Spioraid Naímh, Baile Ruáin, Áth Cliath 16*

## *Anti-Bullying Policy*

*Ballyroan Boys National School, Ballyroan, Dublin 16.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), the Board of Management of Ballyroan Boys National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Good Behaviour & Discipline. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

### **KEY PRINCIPLES**

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
- 📌 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

*In our school we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment free from all kinds of intimidation and without fear of being bullied. Because our school is well disciplined and organised, this minimises the occurrence of bullying.*

We have a clear policy on the promotion of good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. In dealing with bullying, we distinguish between the child and the behaviour. However, bullying is WRONG and will not be tolerated.

## WHAT IS 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.

Appendix 1 outlines some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils.

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 Good Behaviour & Discipline.

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 Good Behaviour & Discipline.

## EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Ballyroan Boys' National School is a **TELLING SCHOOL**, in that children are encouraged to tell if they feel they are being bullied by another child or group of children. Children are also strongly encouraged to tell a teacher or parent if they feel another child is being victimised in any way.

Bullying affects everyone, not just those who are bullied and who bully. It affects other children who watch and less aggressive pupils who can be drawn in by group pressure. It can also affect the class dynamic and can be upsetting for children in the class who fear they may also be bullied.

Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out.

In Ballyroan Boys' National School - in keeping with our mission statement - we aim to provide a happy, caring and secure learning environment in which the individual student is enabled to achieve his/her full potential. We also try to create a welcoming, safe, respectful and inclusive atmosphere in school. Respect for another is central to our dealings with all school personnel. All members of the school community are expected to show respect to one another in all that they say and in all that they do.

Bullying is regularly addressed as a standalone issue in school and the following education and prevention strategies are employed by teachers throughout the school:

- 🌈 Regular **Circle Time** features strongly in our SPHE programme. This allows children ample opportunity to talk about their concerns in a safe environment.
- 🌈 Children may prefer to remain anonymous when reporting a bullying incident. A **Worry Box** is kept in each classroom and outside the principal's office to allow children the opportunity to report in confidence any incidents of bullying, which they may have witnessed.
- 🌈 **Anti-Bullying Week** takes place in school in November each year during which various activities take place.
- 🌈 The **Student Council** proposes ideas that promote inclusion, e.g, **International Day** in which children of different nationalities share their cultural and religious views with the rest of the school.
- 🌈 At our **Carol Service**, candles are lit for all the nationalities in our school and we regularly pray for one another.
- 🌈 **Anti-bullying posters** are displayed around the school and the content of these posters is discussed at class level.
- 🌈 The topic is regularly addressed at **school assemblies** and children are reminded that this a 'telling school'.
- 🌈 **Class questionnaires** are distributed if a teacher feels there may be bullying taking place in class. This is usually done anonymously to give the whole class a chance to say if they think anyone is bullied. Confidentiality is respected during class discussions.
- 🌈 **Cyber-bullying** is dealt with on a regular basis - particularly in senior classes. External speakers may also be invited to the school to address this issue.
- 🌈 **School newsletters** are used to raise parents' awareness of cyberbullying
- 🌈 **Internet Safety Day** is an important feature of our school year and talks on cyberbullying are arranged for parents and pupils.
- 🌈 **Local Gardaí** talk go 5<sup>th</sup> class pupils about bullying and cyber-bullying as part of a as part of An Garda Síochána's Schools Programmes.
- 🌈 Staff are expected to abide by the **Dignity in the Workplace Charter** and to show good example to children in their dealings with all school personnel. In this way, we try to promote respectful relationships across the school community

The following advice is given to **children** who are being bullied.

**Remember! Tell!** - Silence is the bully's greatest weapon.

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Tell others that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual. You are unique!
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard, but a bully enjoys someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive. Shout, "NO, GO AWAY"! Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will be listened to and will get immediate support.

**Remember!** Teachers will listen to you, and will deal with bullies in a way that will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

The following advice is given to **parents** whose children are being bullied.

**How might you know when a child is being bullied?**

Look for unusual behaviour. For example a child may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill

regularly, act out of character or not complete work to his/her usual standard. Be aware of any of the following:

- Requests for parents to take a child to school or to collect him/her, even though they may have walked to school independently in the past.
- Unexplained changes of mood. This will often occur before he/she returns to school, e.g. at the end of the weekend or at the end of holidays.
- Frequent minor illnesses, especially headache, tummy aches and bed-wetting. These often accompany the mood changes mentioned above.
- Damage to personal property, (e.g. books, clothes) or loss of same.
- An increase in requests for money. If refused this may provoke angry outbursts.
- Unexplained cuts or bruises.

## **WHO INVESTIGATES AND DEALS WITH BULLYING?**

A consistent and clear approach to investigating and dealing with bullying when it occurs is present in our school. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. However, it is common practice that the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher who deals with bullying incidents which affect any child/children in his/her own class. The Principal and Deputy Principal are always on hand to assist or advise the teacher if needed.

It is advisable that the parent make an appointment to speak with the class teacher privately, and not in full view of the class. The principal will arrange class cover for the class teacher to facilitate this. **A parent should never approach a child in relation to bullying incidents.**

All reported incidents - including anonymous reports of bullying - are investigated and dealt with promptly by the class teacher, whose primary aim is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than apportion blame).

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. In that way pupils gain confidence in "telling". It will be made clear, by all teachers and regularly at whole school assemblies, that when children report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

It is very important that all involved understand the approach from the outset.

**Non-teaching staff**, special needs assistants, secretaries or any other ancillary staff will report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

**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 relationship of the parties involved as quickly as possible. The support and co-operation of parents is paramount in dealing with and resolving bullying issues.

**Teachers** will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents. In so far as possible, incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

All interviews will 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 class teacher will seek answers of **what, where, who and why**. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

If a group is involved, each member will 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 his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

Each member of the group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after being interviewed by the teacher. In some cases it may also be appropriate and helpful to ask those involved to **write down** their account of the incident(s).

In cases where it has been determined by the teacher that bullying has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken, according to school policy. The school will give the parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

Where the teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will 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 (pupils and their 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 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.

In cases where the class 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, this must be recorded by the teacher in the recording template and the Principal and Deputy Principal will be informed.

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.

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 through the Principal and the Board of Management.

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.

### **INVESTIGATION, FOLLOW-UP AND RECORDING OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR.**

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:

Ballyroan Boys National School has formal noting and recording of bullying behaviour (Appendix 2). All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the 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. If the teacher is in any doubt, he/she will consult with the Principal or Deputy Principal.

If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, a written record must be kept and passed on to the Principal or Deputy Principal. These records will be kept in a secure place in the school. All incidents of bullying behaviour will also be recorded in the school's Discipline Book, which is updated weekly by the Deputy Principal.

### **BULLYING AS PART OF A CONTINUUM OF BEHAVIOUR**

In Ballyroan Boys National School it is important to note that bullying behaviour is part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy will provide for appropriate linkages with the overall Code of Good Behaviour & Discipline and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate.

In cases where this 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.

### **REFERRAL OF SERIOUS CASES TO THE HSE**

Where the Principal and Deputy Principal deem that the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult with the HSE Children and Family Social Services and/or the Gardaí as appropriate (in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools).

Where teachers 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.

### **SUPPORTS FOR PUPILS AFFECTED BY BULLYING**

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied is in place in Ballyroan Boys' School and is set out in the SPHE plan. In addition to this, such pupils may need counselling (a list of counsellors is available to parents) 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 pastoral care and social skills programme is available in the school.

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

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers. An opportunity to do this is during regular Circle Time activities or as part of the SPHE/RSE programme in every class.

### **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.

### **ONGOING EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

The effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy will be evaluated and reviewed in May each year. Teachers, parents and pupils will be surveyed periodically to ensure that they are satisfied that this Anti-Bullying Policy is meeting their needs. The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be included as an agenda item at staff meetings to ensure that concerns about the policy or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

The Deputy Principal, working with the Principal and teaching staff will examine data gathered from the recording template. Recording templates for bullying behaviour will be stored separately from discipline notes, in a secure area. This data will be collated and analysed once in every school year with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and be made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented.

### **PERIODIC SUMMARY REPORTS TO THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The Principal will provide regular reports to the Board of Management setting out:

- the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template) since the previous report to the Board of Management and
- confirmation that all cases recorded 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 teachers' representative on the Board of Management may also have a role to play in informing the Board of Management about bullying issues in the school.

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.

## 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.

## MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. A standard checklist will be used in undertaking the review. (Appendix 3) The school will put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.

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's Association. (Appendix 4).

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department. This school's Anti-Bullying Policy and its procedures to support the pupil's well-being will be part of whole school and other evaluations by the Department inspectorate.


## CONCLUSION

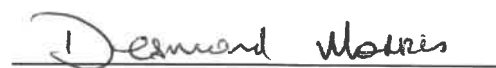
All members of the teaching staff along with the Board of Management were involved in the preparation of this policy and views of parents and pupils were sought.

This anti-bullying policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. All parents are asked to study the policy and are expected to agree with its terms prior to their child's enrolment in the school.

This policy will be reviewed regularly and as deemed necessary. The views and opinions of the partners in education are welcome at all times.

This policy was adopted and ratified by Ballyroan Boys National School Board of Management on 11. 06. 2014.

  
Brendan Vaughan, Chairperson  
Date: 11 / 06 / 20 14

  
Desmond Morris, Príomh Oide  
Date: 11-06-2014