

Anti-Bullying Policy

Ballyfeeney NS

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# **Ballyfeeney National School**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Introduction**

1. 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 Ballyfeeney 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)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;

(b)Effective leadership;

(c)A school-wide approach;

(d)A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

(e)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.

(f)Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

(g)Supports for staff;

(h)Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i)On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

#### **Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school**

At Ballyfeeney NS we are committed to providing a caring, safe and friendly environment for all our pupils. Ballyfeeney is a Roman Catholic primary school where we strive to learn together in a happy and safe environment and where everyone is valued, respected and encouraged to do their best. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our school. The school actively promotes an anti- bullying environment. We are a ‘telling school’ as defined in the Stay Safe Programme which means that pupils are encouraged to tell if they experience or witness bullying.

**Definition:** 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 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 our school’s code of behaviour.

This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

During school time(Including break times)

School Tours/Trips

The school cannot be responsible for disagreements between pupils that happen outside the school grounds but will make reasonable efforts to cooperate with parents in assisting them to resolve the issues.

#### **Why children bully**

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learning behaviour. Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-esteem. Children become bullies for many reasons. Some of these are:

* They may feel insecure and inadequate
* They may be bullies by parents or older children at home
* They may find it difficult to socialise with their peers so pick on younger more vulnerable children.
* They may feel they must succeed at all costs.
* They may be very spoiled and go totally unchallenged at home.
* Others may constantly humiliate them and in turn do this to other children.
* They may be physically, sexually or emotionally abused themselves.
* Some children become involved in bullying by acting as bystanders or supporters of a bully. In this case it must be pointed out that they are equally guilty of bullying.

#### Types of Bullying:

#### Pupils Behaviour

**Extortion**

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out) in the event of the victim not promptly “paying up”. Victims’ lunch or money may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes, this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.

**Intimidation or Gesture Bullying**

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to victims can be the so-called “look” – facial expression, which conveys aggression, dislike or contempt.

**Isolation**

This form of bullying behaviour seems to be more prevalent among girls –“cool gangs”. A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire class or peer group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in the bully behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

**Name calling**

Persistent name-calling or the use of bad language directed at the same individual(s) who hurt, insult or humiliates, should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. “big ears”, fatty, size or clothes worn.

Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention.

Academic ability can also provoke name-calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. First, there are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be slow, or weak academically.

These pupils are often referred to as “dummies”, “dopes” or “donkeys”.

At the other extreme are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers are labelled “swots”, “brain boxes”, licks, teacher’s pet, etc.

**Slagging**

This behaviour usually refers to the good natured banter, which goes on as part of normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at one individual about appearance, clothing, and personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one’s family, and then it assumes the form of bullying.

Suggestive remarks about a pupil’s sexual orientation can also be classified as bullying – “gay”, “lessie” and can have a life-long effect on the pupil.

**Malicious Rumours**

Spreading malicious rumours about a person is also a form of bullying.

**Cyber-Bullying**

Cyber-bullying is the use of mobile phones, instant messaging, email or social networking sites to harass, threaten or intimidate someone. We must be aware that children nowadays have easy access to these technologies and so are vulnerable to this type of bullying.

**Physical Aggression**

This behaviour is more common among boys than girls. It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While boys commonly engage in “mess fights” these can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

**Damage to Property**

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully. This may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning materials. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden or marked with graffiti.

**Bullying of School Personnel**

Bullying of school personnel by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to peoples’ families’, etc.

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#### B **Teacher Behaviour**

A teacher may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:

* + Shouting at pupils as a normal part course of daily routine/discipline
  + Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning forms of language when addressing pupils, making negative comments about a pupil’s appearance or background.
  + Humiliating directing or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways.
  + Using threatening or intimidatory gestures, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercises.

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally, in the first instance, be raised with the staff member in question and then if necessary, with the Principal. We believe these issues are best resolved informally and at an early stage.

#### **Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms**

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

* Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route to travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
* Fear of going out to the yard.
* Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, particularly among older children.
* Mitching.
* Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
* Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
* Unexpected changes either in mood or behaviour. These may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
* Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, and difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
* Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers – “we can’t tell the teacher as she gets cross and shouts”.
* Possessions missing or damaged.
* Increased requests for money or stealing money to meet extortion demands.
* Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
* Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her
* Becoming isolated in the class
* Unexplained absences.
* May begin to bully other smaller children
* Become isolated in the playground.
* Continuously making excuses to explain any of the above.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. They can

also be indicative of other problems. If repeated or occurring in combination those signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

**Dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

It is recognised internationally that bullying behaviour is not confined to

schools.

It is prevalent in society, in the workplace, in cyber-space and in the home. To counteract bullying behaviour, it is important that all involved with children have an understanding of the factors, which give rise to bullying. A high degree of collective vigilance is needed throughout the local community, the school, and other agencies and by parents if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

While recognising and accepting that a community approach is essential in

dealing with bullying, we also recognise that the school is in a unique position

to promote attitudes and to shape patterns of behaviour which are positive

and caring.

###### ***‘At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual…’***

(Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

Our Code of Behaviour states that the school provide an environment where

the child is physically safe and happy and where good relationships are

fostered between pupils, teachers, parent/guardians and others involved in

the running of the school.

**In accordance with this:**

* Ballyfeeney NS recognises the need for teachers and parents/guardians

to communicate and co-operate with each other to maintain goodrelationships within the school community.

* The school recognises the responsibility of parents to share in the taskof equipping their children with a range of skills, which help them withtheir dealing with others.
* The staff recognises that we share a responsibility to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school.
* The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her work as a human being. It therefore aims to foster self-respect and self-discipline in the child. Respect for and courtesy towards each other is encouraged and an awareness of the interdependence of the group/school community is fostered.
* The school acknowledges the right of each child to enjoy school in a secure environment. It therefore promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding amongst the children both in school and out of school.
* The school aims to take particular care of pupils and to respond to their needs, fears or anxieties.

**Those responsible for Implementing this Policy**

**All Teaching Staff, with the Support of SNAs**

All Teaching Staff, with the support of SNAs, will investigate and record incidents of bullying behaviour.

**Yard Monitoring: Teachers and SNA**

Special Needs Assistants will assist teachers in monitoring pupils and activities on yard

**The Board of Management, in conjunction with the staff**

The Board reviews the policy annually and monitors its implementation regularly, including the creation and implementation of annual Action Plans.

**Our education and prevention strategies**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) are as follows:

##### In Ballyfeeney NS programmes for the prevention of bullying are based on positive motivation. Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.

Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

Pupils are actively encouraged to affirm, include and support one another, Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.

The Stay Safe , Walk tall. Fun Friends and Friends for Life programmes are implemented as part of the SPHE curriculum throughout the school. Lessons in these areas aim to develop team work, build assertiveness skills, improve co-operation skills, raise awareness of bullying, develop empathy and improve interpersonal skills.

The Grow in Love Education Programme used in all classes further builds on these skills.

**The following methods are employed in our school as part of the Anti-Bullying Policy**.

* Direct teaching of appropriate behaviour
* Talk and Discussion
* Drama, Role Play
* Circle Time
* Collaborative Learning
* Videos/Stories
* Co-Operative Games
* Active discouragement of seemingly harmless remarks/jeering of attributes
* Ensure supervision at all times when pupils access the internet.
* Teachers facebook/twitter or any other social networking sites should be private.
* Sanctions for unauthorised use of the internet/electronic devices will be imposed as per Code of Behaviour and AUP.
* Links are made with many other areas of the curriculum to raise and reinforce awareness of bullying as an unacceptable behaviour e.g. History, Art, Drama and Oral Language and Literature. The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
* Safer Internet Day activities

A Staff supervision rota is in place to ensure that the yard and corridors are supervised at break times. Pupils are closely monitored when moving around the school in large groups and staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.

Staff respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying. All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.

There is a strong sense of community and cooperation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying . Members of the BOM are familiar with the school’s policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.

Parents contribute to and support the school’s policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

**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:**

#### **Procedure for Noting and Reporting Incidents**

#### (Note: Relevant teacher is normally the class teacher)

* Since failure to report bullying can lead to a continuation or deterioration of bullying. the school and parents encourage children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. This can be with the class teacher, the teacher on yard duty at the time, Special Needs Assistants and the Principal or with parents. Non teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour to the relevant teacher. A parent/guardian who may have strong reason that bullying behaviour may have gone unreported should bring this knowledge to the notice of the class teacher concerned.
* 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)
* 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.
* All reports must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. Pupils must be assured that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
* Non teaching staff must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
* 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 as quickly as possible.
* Teachers are advised to take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians.
* Incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure 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, when where, 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, they will be met both individually at first and thereafter as a group.

Each member will be asked of his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said. If appropriate and in certain circumstances those parties involved may be asked to write down their accounts of what happened. Members of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from other members of the group after the interview.

* Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way and will be expected to assist in the investigation. Children should understand that there are no innocent bystanders where bullying is concerned. All bystanders must report bullying, The issue of Bystanders will be a teaching focus in class.
* 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, parents will be given 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 pupils being bullied
* In a situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents and the school.
* Follow up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date.
* 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 the bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the class teacher on the recording template as in Appendix 3 (Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post primary Schools).

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

* Where the bullying has ceased
* Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as 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 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 procedure.

**Recording of Incidents:**

All reports will 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 the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding the same.

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 parties involved.

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour 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. 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.

At least once every school term the principal will provide a report to the BOM setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported by means of this template and confirmation that all cases are being dealt with according to procedure.

**Parents/Guardians Role:**

* It is important to be realistic, it will not be possible for a single child to assert his/her rights if attacked by a gang. Children should be advised to get away and tell in situations such as this. Tell them that you would have done the same in such a situation.
* Teaching your child to say “No” in a good assertive tone of voice and to carry himself/herself in a confident way will help your child to deal with many situations.
* A child’s self image and body language may send out many messages to potential bullies.
* Children should be encouraged to talk about bullying and given an opportunity to express their concerns.
* Approach your child’s teacher if the bullying is school related. It is important for you to understand that bullying in school can be difficult for teachers to detect because of the large number of children involved. Teachers will appreciate bullying being brought to light. School bullying requires that parents and teachers work together for a resolution.
* Very often parental advice to a child is to “hit back” at the bully if the abuse is physical. This is not always realistic as it requires a huge amount of courage and indeed sometimes makes the situation worse. Children should not be encouraged to engage in violent behaviour. Teaching children to be more assertive and to tell is far more positive and effective.
* Keep an account of the incident to help you to assess how serious the problem is. Many children, with a little help, overcome this problem very quickly.

**The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows :**

**In addition to developing positive self worth through curricular and extracurricular activities pupils will be involved in Sport, Circle Time, Golden Rules, Role Play, Choir, Concerts, Green schools Projects, SPHE**

Victims are reassured that they aren’t to blame from the outset. Strategies to restore self esteem are explored between teachers and parents/guardians. If deemed necessary, the child in consultation with parents may be referred for counselling.

Staged approach: class support, school support (as per *Continuum-Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties*-NEPS)

The parents of the pupils concerned will be advised to contact the Gardaí if appropriate.

**Bullies:** Where deemed necessary, the child, in consultation with the parents may be referred for counselling. They may need to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Clinical assessment and therapy may be necessary.

Staged approach: class support, school support (as per *Continuum-Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties-*NEPS)In certain cases too it may be necessary to invite assistance from formal agencies such as Gardaí or the H.S.E.

**Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons.

Cyber bullying includes the use of mobile phones and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone.

It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice based bullying. Unlike other forms of bullying a once off posting can constitute bullying.

While this policy addresses issues related to cyber bullying of students the policy also applies to teaching and other staff.

Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil’s home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. It is illegal for a child under 13 to register with and use many social media networks, including Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital contact can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

Students will be informed about cyber bullying in the course of their education at the school.

Advice will be communicated to help students protect themselves from being involved in bullying and to advise them on reporting any incidents.

During our annual Internet Safety Day teachers will endeavour to dedicate a standalone lesson to deal with the issue of cyber bullying

Students and staff are expected to comply with the school’s AUP.

Ballyfeeney NS endeavours to block access to inappropriate websites and no pupil is allowed to work on the internet without a staff member present.

**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.

**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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

The Policy is available on our school website. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel and will be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents’ Association.

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_