

Rathgormack National School Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Rathgormack 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 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.See **Appendix 1** for practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate.
- **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); and**
- **Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

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

Class Teacher / Supervising Teacher
Principal
Deputy Principal
All teachers

5. The education and prevention strategies that will be used in the school are as follows:

- Create a positive school environment.
- Develop social skills.
- Supervision.
- Record Keeping/Incident Book
- Classroom Rules – age specific.
- Code of Behaviour.
- SPHE Lessons including Walk Tall, Stay Safe, RSE.
- Transition to Secondary School Lessons (Moving on Up)
- Grow in Love Lessons.
- Drama Lessons / Drama Contract
- Sporting Activities / Promoting Team Work

- Green Flag – Global Citizenship.
- Posters.
- Website Filtering.
- Acceptable Use of Internet Policy.
- Internet Safety Awareness Lessons.
- Circle Time.
- Staff Training.
- Promote a culture of Diversity and Inclusion for everybody.

6. Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour.

(i) 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)

(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 incidences of bullying they are behaving responsibly.

(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers and cleaners must 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 above approach from the outset.

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

(viii) Incidents are generally best **investigated outside the classroom** situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

(ix) 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.

(x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will **seek answers** to questions of what, where, when, who and why.

(xi) If a group is involved, each member will be **interviewed individually**. Those involved may 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.

(xii) Each member of a group will be **supported** through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

(xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down / draw their account of the incident(s).

(xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, **the parents of the parties involved will be contacted** to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). 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 will **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 pupil being bullied.

(xvi) **Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties** involved may 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.

(xvii) In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within a reasonable timeframe, after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be **recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 2**

(xviii) 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 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.
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

(xix) 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.

(xx) 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.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management has ensured that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these are documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must 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 must use the **recording template at Appendix 2** 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 a reasonable timeframe after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal, as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 2** 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 2** 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.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- Support will be provided for anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or other teacher, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it.
- A victim will be assured that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.
- The school will inform parents/guardians of what has happened and of the measures being taken to help them

- They will be encouraged to report further incidences if they occur.
- Advice will be given to the person responsible for bullying. This will include speaking with them to discover why they became involved, informing their parents/guardians and continuing to work with them in order to modify their behaviour.

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.

9. 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 reasonable 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Rathgormack National School on 25th June 2019.

11. This policy has been made available;

- To school personnel
- Published on the website
- Provided to the Parents Association.
- A copy of this policy will be available for viewing in the school office.
- A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron, if requested.

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

Signed: Mr Francis Quigley
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Cathy Power
Principal

Date: 25/6/2019

Date: 25/6/2019

Reviewed: 19/6/20

Reviewed: 22/6/21

Date of next review: June 2022