

Castleblakeney National School

Castleblakeney, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. Tel. 090 9678433 U.R. 16464I

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the code of behavior guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Castleblakeney N.S. has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behavior. 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 recognizes 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 behavior:
 - 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 behavior 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 including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behavior (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going 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 behavior 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 behavior, 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 behavior.

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 behavior.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

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 in this school is/are as follows:
 - The class teacher(s) initially
 - The principal thereafter if necessary

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

Provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Prevention and awareness raising measures focusing on cyber-bullying by educating pupils on appropriate online behavior and how to stay safe while online.

Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner.

There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the interrelated areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe & RSE programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programs which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognize and cope with bullying. The Weaving Wellbeing Programme from 2nd class encourages the development of resilience, respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school groups as well as through practical subjects.

Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channeling and learning how to control aggression. GAA coaching is offered to some classes from outside agencies and teachers are also involved in coaching the school's football, hurling and camogie teams.

6. 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 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. With this in mind the schools procedures are as follows:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/ their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). 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 incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Parents/Guardians 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. It is very important that all involved understand this approach.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible, but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the 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, the relevant teacher should seek answers to question of what, where, when who and why. This should 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 should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be as group. 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 them from other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

- Where the relevant teacher has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviours, 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 pupil being bullied.

- It may also be necessary to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) 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. The school expects that parents/guardians will reinforce and support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils

- It must also 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 disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

- 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.
- An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.
- 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.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, that school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s), the relevant teacher(s) will use his/her/their 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 it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, their 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.

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

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parents seek referrals to outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed.

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.

This policy was adopted by the BOM on Jan 2016

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. 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 and will be made available to school personnel and parents. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Mr. Martin Giblin Chairperson

Date: 14th September 2023

Signed: Anna Maher Principal

Date : 14th September 2023

Reviewed September 2023

Date of Next Review September 2024

Appendix 1

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**

Shouting and uncontrolled anger,
Personal insults,
Verbal abuse,
Offensive language directed at an individual,
Continually shouting or dismissing others,
Public verbal attacks/criticism,
Domineering behaviour,
Open aggression,
Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**

Treating in a dictatorial manner,
Ridicule,
Persistent slagging,
Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.
Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.
Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork.

- **Interference with property, for example:**

Stealing/damaging books or equipment
Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
Demanding money with menaces
Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**

Condescending tone,
Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,
Writing of anonymous notes,
Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments,
Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes,
Knowingly spreading rumours,
Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,
Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),
Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),
Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,
Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

Deliberately marginalising an individual

Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,
Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational
Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.