

Anti-Bullying Policy



Revised Anti-Bullying Policy

St. Manchan's National School, Mohill, Co. Leitrim

Reviewed: June 2014, June 2015, June 2016, January 2017,
March 2018, December 2021, January 2023, January 2024,
February 2025

Introduction

1. In accordance with the Education (Welfare Act 2000) and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Manchan's National School, Mohill, has adopted the following antibullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *AntiBullying 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 within 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
- Promoted 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;
 - 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.

Definition of Bullying

3. In accordance with the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by and 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 types of bullying include intimidation, isolation/ exclusion or other relational bullying, name calling, damage to property and extortion.

4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the Class teacher and the Principal.

Preventative Strategies

5.1. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows;

- ✓ The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the antibullying policy.
- ✓ Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- ✓ Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- ✓ Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- ✓ The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- ✓ Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied, with particular regard to pupils with SEN.
- ✓ All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- ✓ Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils through the roles of the Board Members in the school, by reviewing the policy with input from all stakeholders in the School Community, by example and by promoting and improving communication and supporting the Principal in ensuring the Policy is adhered to.
- ✓ 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.

- ✓ Cyber-Bullying requires access to technology. Pupils are supervised at all times when working with technology in the school. Pupils, who of necessity must bring their phones to school are required to hand them up to the teacher for safe keeping during the school day.
- ✓ The Catholic Ethos of the school encourages positive attitudes to inclusivity and equality. This permeates all aspects of the school day and throughout the teaching of the curriculum.

Awareness of Bullying

5.2. Maintaining awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour

St. Manchan's National School will emphasise and reinforce the view that bullying behaviour is unacceptable by;

- ✓ Using school assemblies to remind pupils of the school's anti bullying policy
- ✓ Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable... visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games...
- ✓ Devising a school anti-bullying charter for display in classrooms and other prominent locations

Supervision

5.3. Supervision

Insofar as is reasonably practicable school activities will be supervised and monitored at all times, with particular emphasis on those occasions when situations of bullying are more likely to occur, such as play time and dismissal time.

6.1. Procedures for Dealing with Instances of Bullying:

Stage 1:

- All incidents of bullying will be recorded in an incident book which will be retained in the school.
- Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly.
- A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the class teacher who will talk to the children involved.

On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will:

1. First interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour. This investigation should take place outside of the class situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned.
2. An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator(s). If the bullying involves a group of pupils, members of that group will first be met individually and then as a whole.
3. Having discussed the negative impact which bullying has on both perpetrator(s) and victim(s) responsibility will be placed on all individuals within the group to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.

While all reports, including anonymous reports 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 action taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

Cyber –bullying will be dealt with by the school when:

- (a) the bullying occurs during any activities where the school has responsibility for students i.e. when children are going to football matches, on school trips etc

(b)when the alleged incidents impact on the on-going life of the school community, provided that the Board of Management have the authority to act in these circumstances.

Reporting Template

Each teacher will use the Reporting Template provided by the Department of Education and Skills (2013) for recording all incidents.

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff will proceed to stage 2.

Stage 2

1. If on the conclusion of the preliminary investigation the teacher is convinced that bullying has occurred the Principal will be informed by way of Appendix 3 Report being completed and submitted.
2. Principal will discuss the issue with the class teacher and meetings will take place with and between the relevant teacher and all relevant parties with a view to resolving matters.
3. If at this stage it is deemed that bullying has occurred Parent(s) /guardian(s) of all concerned will be contacted. 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. The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the cooperation of the parents is essential.

Stage 3 –Sanctions

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the Board of Management. Such sanctions will be

proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying Behaviour. The sanctions and interventions used in St. Manchan's National School are contained in the Code of Behaviour. These sanctions may include a period of suspension. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Board of Management.

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

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved could 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.

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, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be 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 or sexual assault or harassment. The school may refer cases to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where the 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 and advice may also be sought from the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan.

Therefore, serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First* and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

Further supports for pupils affected by bullying

All pupils who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be supported in the first instance by the class teacher. If required, opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self esteem and self worth will be organised. Further interventions where appropriate will be put in place on a case by case basis.

The school's programme of support

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

- The school recognises that pupils who have been bullied may need counselling 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 programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be 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. In this regard, the school recognises that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Prevention of Harassment

8. 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 has been made available to school personnel and will be provided to the School Community. 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 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.

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- ✓ Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- ✓ Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- ✓ Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- ✓ Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- ✓ Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- ✓ Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- ✓ Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- ✓ Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- ✓ Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.

- ✓ Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- ✓ Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- ✓ Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- ✓ All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- ✓ Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- ✓ School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
- ✓ Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
- ✓ Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- ✓ Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Ratification of Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 11/02/2025

Signed: Fr. Nigel Charles, Chairperson of Board of Management

Date : 11/02/2025

Signed: Maeve Heslin, School Principal.

Date: 11/02/2025

Date of next review: January 2026