



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 Gaelscoil na Mí 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.
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:

Physical aggression; Intimidation; Deliberate exclusion / isolation, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying; Name calling; Damage to property; Cyber-bullying; Extortion; 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.

Please see Appendix 1 for a non-exhaustive list of examples of bullying behaviour.

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.

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

All class teachers will initially investigate incidents of bullying behaviour. Class teachers are requested to inform the Senior Management Team (Principal & Deputy Principal) of any investigations taking place. Please Note: **Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.**

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- The multi-denominational ethos of Gaelscoil na Mí celebrates diversity and promotes inclusivity. Through the implementation of 'Signposts for Life' & elements of the 'Educate Together' curriculum, children will learn about human rights from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. These lessons are used to promote self-esteem /confidence, to teach the children between right and wrong and to celebrate difference. Particular attention will be paid to chil-

dren with SEN in order to promote inclusion and develop their ability to respond appropriately to bullying behaviour.

- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Time will be devoted to discussion on bullying at each class level- in an age appropriate way. Teachers will place great emphasis on re-affirming the children's sense of self-esteem.
 - Parents and children will be informed of our anti bullying policy. Children will be encouraged and helped to **Say No to Bullying Behaviour** and to report experiences of bullying. Children will be taught there is a big difference between telling tales and asking for help.
 - To coincide with Amnesty International Friendship Week we will hold a Friendship /Anti-Bullying Week during the month of February. All classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class will learn about bullying and what they should do if they are being bullied or if they know that someone else is being bullied. During Friendship /Anti Bullying Week the topics of Cyber Bullying and homophobic bullying will be taught formally in 5th & 6th Classes.
 - Human Rights Week will take place in the school every November. Each year Children from 3rd to 6th Class will explore the Equal Status Act and the nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited in Ireland.
 - Children from 3rd to 6th Class will take part in the schools Anti Bullying Campaign and will use and adapt some of the lessons suggested by Sean Fallon's Anti Bullying Campaign. We will adapt these lessons based on the needs of our school at that time.
 - SPHE lessons in 5th & 6th Class will teach the children about staying safe on the internet, the children will be taught about how to behave correctly on line in a manner that keeps both themselves and other people safe.
 - RSE lessons in 5th & 6th Class will foster self-esteem and understanding.
 - Development of a safer school environment through our 'Comrádaí Clóis' system which aims to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
 - A school community which openly fosters respect for all members will be encouraged and promoted.
 - Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
 - Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering programmes in the area of anti-bullying/ cyberbullying will be encouraged.
6. The schools procedures for reporting, investigating, recording, intervention and follow up strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows;

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- Bystanders are told the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

Investigating Incidents

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 (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; the relevant teacher will keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, 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, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should 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;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- Where 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.
- Where appropriate or helpful those involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Each member of staff should keep a written account of all incidents seen by them or reported to them. Every incident should be reported to the Relevant Teacher.
- All reports of bullying will be recorded by the relevant teacher using the school template (Appendix 2) for recording bullying incidents.
- All incidents of bullying being investigated should be reported to the Principal.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child being bullied

should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken.

- If following a thorough investigation the teacher determines that bullying has not occurred he/she will refer the issue to the Principal and the Senior Management Team (SMT) for a second opinion.
- The SMT will make a decision as to whether bullying has taken place or not. The decision will be recorded and communicated to the parents concerned.
- All records relating to the incident will be kept in unmarked files in the Principal's office (GSnaMí will need to develop a policy on data protection / record keeping).

Sanctions

As previously stated 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 rather than to apportion blame. Therefore the child perpetrating the bullying behaviour will be afforded the opportunity to explain their behaviour in a confidential environment. Being open and honest and signing a written promise not to reoffend the child will remain safe from sanction and repercussions.

However, bullying behaviour is considered a very serious offence in Gaelscoil na Mí and following the first intervention meeting with the school principal the bullying behaviour is known to continue, the child in question will immediately lose the security of the 'no blame' approach and point 6. of the Code of Behaviour will be immediately implemented.

6. *Sent to Principal - letter home to parents.*
7. *Sent to Principal - formal meeting with parents.*
8. *Consideration of further more serious sanctions including suspension / expulsion.*

It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

Intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process.
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

Follow Up

- 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;
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
 - Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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.

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Reporting to the Board of Management

At every BoM meeting the Principal will provide a report to the board setting out:

- The number of bullying cases reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report.
- Confirmation that all of these cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures.

(a) The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- Discussion of the incidents with the victims, reassuring them that they were right to bring the events to the attention of staff, that they were not telling tales and their actions will help others, they will be reminded that they should tell again if they have any new concerns.
- The teacher(s) involved and the principal will check from time to time with the child that everything is ok.
- Close communication between the child's home and school will form a vital part in the child's recovery from being bullied. Class teachers will contact the child's parents regularly to ensure that problems have not persisted.
- Children who have engaged in bullying behaviour also need support and close communication between school and home.
- The class teachers of the alleged bullies and victims will work on rebuilding the children's self-esteem in small group and whole class settings. Further work will be done on friendships, social skills and resilience development.
- A buddy system will be set up if deemed necessary.
- The school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies for pupils requiring counselling for further support.

(b) Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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.

(c) 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 _____ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, will be published on the school website and has been provided to the Parents' Association. 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, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). 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: _____

Appendix 1 : Examples of bullying behaviours

<p>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The “look” • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/ Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures/Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
<p>Identity Based Behaviours</p>	<p>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>
<p>Homophobic and Transgender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats

Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background. • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone’s friends away • “Bitching” • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The “look” • Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person’s disability • Setting others up for ridicule.