



Anti-Bullying Policy

Rationale:

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 Whitechurch NS 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 and is in line with circular 0045/2013 which was published in September 2013.

This policy aims to produce a safe and a caring environment in which all children can develop to their full potential. This policy document supersedes all previous anti bullying documents.

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community – pupils, staff and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organization within the school for preventing and responding to bullying.

Aims:

1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
3. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
4. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour.

Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

'Unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated'

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.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, isolation, name calling, writing notes, emailing or texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour it is usually hurtful and deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour, which must not be condoned. However when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying.

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

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

School Staff

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school.

Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidence of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and use behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding a solution to problems when they arise.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the Alive-O programme, the Social Personal and Health Education programme. Stay Safe.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other.

Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers.

Parents

Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.

Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.

Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.

Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.

Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.

Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.

Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying 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).

Bullying incidents should be reported initially to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent or a friend. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the Principal.

Procedures for Recording Bullying Incidents

RECORDING:

Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the *template for recording bullying behaviour* see appendix 1 of this policy document. This template is in accordance with circular 0045/2013.

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

- (i) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved
- (ii) 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'. 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
- (iii) 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
- (iv) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset
- (v) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents

Responding to Bullying

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 behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) should 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 should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved could be met as a group.

Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have 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 pupil being bullied.

It may also be appropriate or helpful 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.

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.

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, encourage them to report further incidences if they occur.

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.

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.

Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break or subject to special monitoring procedures and if bullying continues they may be suspended in accordance with procedure.

Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school code of discipline.

Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school.

Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

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.

Oversight Arrangements:

In accordance with circular 0045/2013 the principal will provide a report at least once a term to the Board of Management setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported to the principal and confirmation that the cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti bullying policy.

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.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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.

Anti bullying Policy latest review ratified by the Board of Management

Date: 16/06/2014

Signature: JMC Chairperson Board of Management.

Signature: Michael Callow Principal.