



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Preamble:

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 Wicklow Educate Together 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.

We note that good leadership, a shared understanding of all types of bullying, and a school-wide approach to managing bullying, are essential components of an effective anti-bullying strategy. We strive for a positive school culture and an environment that is never threatening in any way. We actively welcome diversity and promote respectful relationships across our school community. We implement a range of education and prevention strategies to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. We ensure that pupils are supervised at all times and encourage them to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour if they witness or experience them. We use established intervention strategies and ensure the consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of any bullying behaviour. We monitor the effectiveness of our policy on an ongoing basis.

The school has a central role in the children's social moral development just as it does in their academic development. In school, we work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. The individuality of each child needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a safe disruption free environment.

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.

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- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

1. Definition

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. Isolated instances of aggressive behaviour, which would be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour, would not be described as bullying. However when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying.

These are examples of bullying

Physical aggression, including unwanted physical contact

Intimidation, for example using the voice as a weapon or using menacing body language/facial expressions

Relational bullying, including deliberate isolation/exclusion and malicious gossip

Cyber-bullying, which is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as phone, text, social networking sites, email, instant messaging, apps, gaming sites, chatrooms and other online means

Persistent name-calling which hurts, insults or humiliates • Interference with/damage to personal property

Extortion, including demands for money or forcing theft to be carried out, likely accompanied by threats

Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying; racist bullying; bullying based on gender, family status or religion; and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs **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).

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying, including isolated incidents of intentional negative behaviour, will be dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. Specifically in the context of cyber-bullying, a once-off offensive or hurtful text, email or other private message, does not fall within the definition of bullying. As such, it will be dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. However, 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.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 BOM

It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that this document is kept up-to date and that the policy is upheld. The BOM seeks to ensure staff members are able to avail of training and development opportunities for dealing effectively with bullying issues that they might come across during the course of their work.

2.2 Staff

2.2.1 Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that these procedures for preventing, challenging and responding to bullying are implemented. The Deputy Principal will assume her duties in

her absence. As leaders in the school community, they are in a strong position to influence attitudes and set standards in relation to bullying behaviour. The Principal has a particular role in making sure that all staff members are familiar with the anti-bullying policy and how this policy is implemented in practice in the school.

2.2.2 Teaching staff

Teaching staff must always act as good role models and must never misuse the authority that they have. Children should be able to feel that they can go to any member of the teaching staff about any issue relating to bullying (this includes the Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers and the Principal). The member of staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with any alleged incidents of bullying (the ‘Relevant Teacher’ – see section 4) will ordinarily be the child’s class teacher, but this role may be assumed by SEN teachers or the Principal in certain cases.

2.2.3 Other staff

All other staff of the school, including new recruits, substitute teachers and support staff such as Bus Escort, Special Needs Assistants and classroom assistants, are expected to be familiar with the anti-bullying policy and to report any incidents of bullying or potential bullying behaviour to the Relevant Teacher.

2.3 Parents and guardians

We recognise that parents and guardians can play a vital role in terms of modelling anti-bullying behaviour and ensuring that their children are equipped with key life skills. We offer parents and guardians opportunities to be involved in policy development around bullying and also in practical initiatives that prevent bullying from taking place. We ask parents and guardians to be vigilant about any possible bullying that may be occurring and to understand that this may be happening outside of school (any behaviour outside of school that impacts on school life can become a school issue). They are requested to report any such suspicions to the Principal, regardless of whether their own child is involved. If their child is suspected of engaging in bullying behaviour, parents and guardians are requested to cooperate fully with any investigation, so that the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible in the best interests of all concerned. Furthermore, we believe that the Parents’ Association is well placed to organise general talks on preventing and dealing with bullying and we will aim to support them in doing this if they so choose.

2.4 Pupils

Pupils may not bully each other. If they feel that they are being bullied, they must tell an adult that they trust about it, who will then ensure action is taken to stop the bullying from happening. If they witness or become aware of someone else being bullied, they must also tell a trusted adult about it, who will then ensure action is taken to stop the bullying from happening. If children feel able to, they are encouraged to let those who are engaging in bullying behaviour know that this is not acceptable.

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

We have a range of strategies in place to prevent bullying:

- Pupils are supervised at all times and behaviour amongst and between pupils is monitored closely.
- We emphasise positive behaviour, as described in detail in our behaviour policy.
- We deliver our Social Personal Health Education programme each year, which contains an anti-bullying module.
- We undertake a range of awareness-raising exercises with all classes, proactively explaining the nature, variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
- We help pupils to examine the issue of bullying in a calm, rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents and we encourage them to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour.
- We discuss bullying prevention on a regular basis as part of staff meetings, including the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied and the action to be taken if so.
- We inform parents and guardians on a regular basis about the initiatives that we have put in place to combat bullying. We ask for their vigilance about signs of bullying and request that they support the school in its anti-bullying work.
- We are proactive in working with external agencies and external service providers to manage the issue of bullying as effectively as we can (for example, the National Educational Psychological Service).

4 Bullying intervention

4.1 Early intervention

If bullying does occur, we intervene as early as possible to put a stop to the behaviour, using the following approach:

- The Relevant Teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to a swift end.
- The Relevant Teacher should inform the Principal (or Deputy Principal in her absence) that this step is being taken, so that she can assist and support the Relevant Teacher if necessary.
- The school, through the Relevant Teacher, reserves the right to ask a pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of bullying.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the Relevant Teacher to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it.
- In the event that it is concluded that they have been involved in bullying behaviour, they are asked to promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully, including the targeted pupil(s).
- The Relevant Teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats the first incident of bullying behaviour as a ‘mistake’ that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is, and to seek a commitment that it will stop. If such a promise is forthcoming and is honoured, there will be no penalty and that will normally be the end of the matter.
- However, it may also be helpful at this stage to bring the child(ren) who was/were bullying together with the child(ren) who was/were bullied, for a meeting, in order to fully resolve the process.
- Furthermore, it may also be helpful to notify parents/guardians at this stage, in order to fully resolve the process.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved, the Relevant Teacher will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. See Appendix 1.
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the child’s class folder.

4.2 Dealing with repeated or very serious bullying behaviour

It is possible that the early intervention procedure described above does not stop the bullying behaviour, or that the bullying is so serious that the above procedure is not appropriate. If a pupil has made a promise to stop bullying, but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a ‘mistake’. This is regarded as a very grave matter requiring the imposition of any of the sanctions below, which will invariably involve the Principal and/or her Deputy:

- The school may contact the pupil's parents or guardians with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured (this may, for example, involve signing a formal promise, countersigned by a parent or guardian).
- The school's suspension procedure may be enacted (see behaviour policy).
- The school's expulsion procedure may be enacted (see behaviour policy).

5 Managing the aftermath of bullying

We recognise that all children who have been affected by bullying behaviour require subsequent support. The approach we adopt is one of 'reform not blame'.

5.1 Bullied pupils

Taking immediate steps to resolve bullying situations is our priority. We will ensure bullied pupils are treated with empathy throughout. After the situation has been resolved, we will offer them the opportunity to complete a victim impact statement. If necessary, we will encourage parents/guardians to ensure their children access adequate and timely counselling support. We will also help the pupils to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills. Furthermore, we will seek to make even more changes to our school culture to foster even greater mutual respect. In particular, we will ensure all children are reminded that bullying is never the fault of the targeted pupil(s).

5.2 Bullying pupils

We will make it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and we will give them credit for this. They will not be blamed or punished and will get a 'clean sheet', provided that they keep to their promises. We will help them to enhance their feelings of self-worth using a range of learning strategies; this may also include raising their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills. If necessary, we will encourage parents/guardians to ensure their children access adequate counselling to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.

Programme for Work with Pupils

Learning strategies will allow for the enhancement of each pupil's self-worth – lessons such as *Stay Safe*, *Circle Time* and *Walk Tall* will be taught during S.P.H.E. across all classes.

6. Bullying by other members of the school community

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, Wicklow Educate Together National School will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (c2) of the INTO booklet: '*Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations*'. A copy of this document is available for inspection from the school by any interested party.

In the case of **Child – Teacher bullying**,

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In the case of **Teacher – Child bullying**, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child and then if necessary referred to the Principal in writing. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

In the case of **Parent – Teacher bullying**, the Principal should be informed in writing in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed.

In the case of **Parent – Child bullying**, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently in writing to the Principal if necessary.

7. Oversight and Review

Periodic summary reports to the Board of Management

The procedures include oversight arrangements which require that, at least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template in [Appendix 1](#)) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the Board and
- confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and these procedures, and the "*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*".

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

As part of the oversight arrangements, the Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school. 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 standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is included at [Appendix 2](#). A record of the review and its outcome must be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

The [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____

Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
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Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/ SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 2 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school’s anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school’s anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents’ association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal’s periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school’s handling of bullying incidents?	

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Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____

Principal

Date _____

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department's Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

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Signed _____
Principal

Date _____