



**Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire  
Ballyleague  
Co Roscommon**

**October 2024**

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**Whole School Plan for**

# **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

## **BALLYLEAGUE NATIONAL SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

**1. Rationale:** This policy outlines ways in which our school seeks to foster a respectful, caring environment, and to address incidents of bullying. A well- managed supportive learning environment encourages the holistic development of the child. 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 **Ballyleague 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.

**2. Key Principles:** 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:

**Fostering 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;
- Encourages effective leadership;
- Follows a school-wide approach;
- Is based on a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

**The 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.
- Is based on effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Provide supports for staff;
- Are characterised by 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.

**3. Definition of Bullying:** 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 behaviours 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.



*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 information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. Included are physical aggression, intimidation, isolation, persistent name calling, extortion, damage to property.

#### **4. The Relevant Teacher(s) for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying are as Follows:**

The class teacher will have primary responsibility for investigating alleged cases of bullying. However, dependent on the seriousness of the case involved, the class teacher may decide to consult the Principal or Deputy Principal, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Should an alleged instance of bullying involve pupils from a range of classes, the class teacher will liaise with the Principal or Deputy Principal to carry out the investigation. The primary aim will be to resolve and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships or the parties involved, (rather than to apportion blame).

The Restorative Justice approach is used to investigate bullying behaviour.

#### **5. The Education and Prevention Strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:**

- The implementation of the SPHE curriculum which makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The implementation of The Stay Safe programme, a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
- Provision will be made for the implementation of Web-safety awareness and the appropriate use of social media under the auspices of SPHE. Pupils will be required to adhere to the school's policy on inter-net and use of communication technology.
- The implementation of the Catholic Ethos throughout the school.
- Within the teaching of all subjects opportunities will be sought to foster attitudes of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Sporting, play and group activities which foster opportunities for co-operation, enjoyment and respect for others will be encouraged.
- The explicit teaching and implementation of the school's Code of Behaviour throughout the school.
- Respectful behaviour will be modelled and encouraged by all members of the school community. Children will be explicitly taught respectful language and behaviour in class, on the yard and around the school. Key messages of respect will be displayed in



classrooms and around the school and children will be involved in the development of these messages.

- Language which is discriminatory or disrespectful (including homophobic, racist, belittling of physical or intellectual disabilities) will be challenged. Constructive feedback will be given in the absence of respect and dealt with in line with the school's code of behaviour if such behaviour persists.
- The effective use of praise for positive behaviour.
- The encouragement of effective home school links and the organisation of information evenings for parents on a range of parenting issues in consultation with the Parents Association.
- Effective staff supervision, including identification of potential "bullying hot-spots" and "hot times" to be monitored and or supervised. Individual and whole school ownership of the anti-bullying policy, effective inter –staff communication. Ongoing implementation, monitoring, record keeping and review.
- Annual review of anti-bullying policy by whole school staff and the board of management.

#### **6. The Relevant Teacher(s) for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying are as Follows:**

The class teacher will have primary responsibility for investigating alleged cases of bullying. However, dependent on the seriousness of the case involved, the class teacher may decide to consult the Principal or Deputy Principal, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour, in which case the relevant teacher must record a signed written account of the incident in the School Incident Book, which is kept in the Principal's office.

Should an alleged instance of bullying involve pupils from a *range of classes*, the class teacher will liaise with the Principal or Deputy Principal to carry out the investigation. The primary aim will be to resolve and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships or the parties involved, (rather than to apportion blame).

Where there has been a report of an incident during break time involving pupils in *one* class, the class teacher will investigate. However, this does not have to be done directly after break. It may be more appropriate to get the class settled and working and then investigate an issue.

Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

#### **7. 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:**

1. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. In that way children will gain confidence in telling. It will be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying that they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

2. In investigating, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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.

3. 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.

4. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

5. Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation as far as is practicable to ensure the privacy of all involved.

6. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will meet as a 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. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

7. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

8. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

9. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher 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 (by reference to the school policy). The school should 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.

10. Where the relevant teacher has 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.

11. It will 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.

12. If appropriate follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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.

13. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher, must in his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
- b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
- c. Whether the relationships between the parties involved have been restored as far as is practicable,



d. And any feedback from their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

14. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template attached to this policy.

15. 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.

16. 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.

#### **Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour:**

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour are as follows and will adhere to data protection legislation.

(i) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying 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 actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

(ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the 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. Appropriate written records include an account of the bullying behaviour, with reference to time and dates as known, context, persons involved, action taken, sanctions implemented. The relevant teacher may wish to consult the principal or deputy principal, in which case the relevant teacher must record a written account of the incident in the School Incident Book .

**(iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:**

a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; **and**

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 3 must** be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable, and retained on file in the school's office.

In cases where the bullying has been resolved, the template form will serve as a summary of investigation (see Appendix2). Where appropriate, additional notes and details will be attached and retained on file, particularly, where the bullying issue was not resolved within the initial 20 days of the investigation.

It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 3** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out: (i) the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at Appendix 3) since the previous report to the Board and (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy 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.

**Where the School has Serious Concerns about a Child:**

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. Accordingly, instances of bullying will be dealt with in tandem with the school's code of behaviour. In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

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 or Gardai as appropriate.

Where school personnel have concerns about a child but are unsure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Services. (cf. "*Children First*" *National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*"; and cf. "*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*" DES)

**8. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):**

**The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:(for victims of bullying AND those involved in bullying behaviour)**

- Effective Home/school communication to support the affected child (both the victim and the bully) in school
- School liaison with the child's social care team ( both the victim and or the perpetrator) as appropriate
- School liaison with NEPS, SESS, or other external agencies as appropriate
- Arrange workshops with trained facilitators to work with class groupings affected
- Focus on role play, play therapy to work out difficulties in a safe controlled environment
- Provide opportunities for participation in activities, focused on those affected, in small groups to promote self-esteem/team work/ friendship
- Use the curriculum to explore opportunities to build emotional resilience – Art, Literature, Drama, Music, P.E., SPHE, Religious Education.
- Monitor affected child's behaviour (those bullying and those being bullied) on the yard, and in potential hot spots in the weeks following an incident of bullying.
- Arrange follow up meetings with students on an ongoing basis following any bullying behaviour.
- Referral to HSE Children and Family Services as appropriate
- Referral to counselling services as appropriate for both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Develop ownership of code of discipline, anti-bullying policy throughout the school



- Continue to raise bullying awareness throughout the school and encourage children to take action when something is wrong by “Telling” an adult they trust.

#### **9. 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.

#### **10. 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.

11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2022.

12. This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request, and provided to the Parents’ Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

13. 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: Brenda Reynolds  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

DATE: 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

SIGNED: Colm Conlon  
(Principal)

DATE: 10.10.24

**DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:** Nov 2025

This Policy was reviewed by Colm Conlon from the Professional Development Support Service (PDST) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2022.



## Appendix A

### **Bí Cineálta Initiative**

In November 2023 we received the Cineáltas flag. This flag acknowledges the good work that the school is already doing and will do to prevent and address bullying and to promote kindness, respect, inclusion, diversity and wellbeing.

We raised our flag during anti-bullying week from 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023.

### **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying is rooted in the following four key principles:**

- > Prevention: Through the generation of empathy and the provision of training which provides a foundation for knowledge, respect, equality and inclusion.
- > Support: Tangible and targeted supports based on a continuum of needs which provide a framework for school communities to work together.
- > Oversight: Visible leadership creates positive environments for children and young people and all members of our school community.
- > Community: Building inclusive school communities that are connected to society, and that support and nurture positive relationships and partnerships.

Staff, Parents and board of management members will receive training as it is made available.

