

Scoil Mhuire, Howth Primary School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Howth Primary 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. This policy focuses solely on bullying that involves pupils who attend Scoil Mhuire, Howth Primary School.
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 positive school culture and climate which (see appendix 2):
 - provides a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere
 - 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
 - promotes 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
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying, when appropriate
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour and together these policies recognise the individuality of each child's needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a disruption free environment.

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:

- 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 information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All class teacher(s) initially ➤ Post of Responsibility (POR) Teacher in charge of discipline, shared with Principal |
|---|

- POR teacher in charge of SPHE
- The Principal

In exceptional circumstances, the principal will get involved at an earlier stage of the process if the circumstances around the bullying behaviour have affected the child who is being bullied to the extent that it meets the threshold of harm as set out by Child Protection Guidelines.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and trans phobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

➤ **School Wide Approach**

- A school wide approach to the fostering of respect, trust, care, consideration, and support for all members of the school community.
- Promoting tolerance, understanding, respecting, and accommodating people's differences.
- Explicit teaching of what behaviours and actions that constitute being a good friend.
- Engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise.
- Examining good dynamics.
- Providing positive role models and celebrating positive behaviour.
- Awareness of cyber bullying, developing an awareness of appropriate online behaviour and how to stay safe while online.
- Monitoring the use of communication technology within the school.
- Encouraging a culture of telling or reporting incidents of bullying. Pupils should know that when they report incidents of bullying, they are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that all pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g., teacher, SNA, parent/guardian, and witnesses.

➤ **Implementation of Curricula**

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Use of Art, Drama, Religious Education and Physical Education, e.g. co-operative games, team sports, school clubs and societies, role plays, discussing scenarios 'What if...',
- Development of social skills through PE, Music, Drama, Language and Communication and Visual Arts.
- Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression, e.g., school's Gaelic and soccer teams.

- **Links to other Policies**
- The following policies are relevant to bullying:
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment
- Internet Safety/ Acceptable Use Policy

6. 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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Reporting bullying behaviour

1. Any pupil or parent/ guardian may bring an alleged bullying incident to a teacher in the school.
2. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, usually the class teacher in the first instance.
3. Teaching and non-teaching staff, e.g., 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.

Investigating and dealing with incidents

4. In Investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/ her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
5. Parents/ guardians 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.
6. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
7. Where possible incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
8. All interviews will 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.
9. 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.

10. If a group is involved, each member will be **interviewed individually at first**. Thereafter, all those involved will 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.
11. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
12. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the parties involved will 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 will give parents/ guardians 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.
13. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to the child how he/ she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
14. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary actions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/ her parents and the school.

Follow-up actions:

15. 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.
16. 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 at Appendix 3.
17. 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 into account:
 - Whether the. Bullying behaviour has ceased
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - Whether the relationship between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
18. Where a parent/ guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/ guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
19. 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 rights to make complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

Informal – pre-determination that bullying has occurred

20. All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or noticed by them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher, usually the class teacher.
21. The relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussion with those involved regarding same.
22. The relevant teacher must inform the POR teacher for behaviour and the Principal of all incidents being investigated and a copy of the incident report must be given to the Principal.

Formal Stage 1: Determination that bullying has occurred

23. 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 relationship of the parties involved.
24. Records will be retained by the relevant teacher and copies will be stored in the pupils files and with the Principal.

Formal Stage 2: Appendix 3 Recording Template from DES Procedures

25. 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, i.e., cyber bullying, bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or POR teacher as applicable. Each situation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and the welfare and safety of the pupil will be paramount.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the Principal. The teacher will store these templates in the pupil files while the Principal's copy will be placed in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office. These records will be retained until the pupil reaches 21 years of age or indefinitely in the case of a child safeguarding issue or a pupil with special educational needs.

Reporting/ Recording to the Board of Management

26. 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 at Appendix 3) since the previous report to the Board.
27. In relation to the cases above, it will be confirmed that they have been dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.
28. 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.

Established 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 parents/ guardians to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative questioning /interviews/ whole school approach
- Implementing pupil surveys

7. 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*):

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g. buddy system, group work such as circle time and social skills development in groups.
- Intervention or referrals may be sought or advised to outside appropriate agencies in order to receive further support for the pupil and their families, if needed.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Referrals of serious cases to Child and Family Agency

In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where 'the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the Child and Family Agency with a view to drawing an appropriate response, such as a management plan'. Serious instances of bullying behaviour will in accordance with the *Children First* and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the Child and Family Agency and / or Gardaí as appropriate.

11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on March 2023.

12. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents 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 when ready and will be accessible to parents and pupils on request 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.

Signed: Sile Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh Signed: Mary Downes
(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: 04/05/23

Date: 04/05/23

Date of next review: March 2024

Appendix 2 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.

Appendix 3 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	
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	
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

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*** Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.