O Connell Primary Anti Bullying Policy

An Edmund Rice School

O Connell Primary School Anti-Bullying Policy

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 O Connell 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 will apply to all pupils while under the care of the school. The policy regarding cyber bullying will apply to actions on the school premises only. Out of school cyber activity may have implications whilst pupils are at school and the school recognises the possibility that the policy may be applied to these situations but also recognises the limitations on what the school can or may do in relation to out of school activity over which the school has no control.

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;
    - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community; this encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, staff member to staff members) and relationships between groups (e.g. staff and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).

- 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.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

- Supports for staff;

- Supports for pupils

- 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.

    - The existence of a shared view by the school community that bullying behaviour is not acceptable.
    - The ability of children to talk to adults about incidents of bullying behaviour.
    - The ability of parents/guardians and teachers to support children who have been bullied or who have bullied others.

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, 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, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community, homophobic bullying 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.

Who investigates incidents of Bullying/alleged bullying?
Class teachers will initially investigate incidents of bullying
Incidents which are of a serious nature, or which involve pupils from a number of classes may be referred to the support teacher or principal for investigation.
The Principal and /or Deputy Principal or support teacher may investigate any incident if he considers it necessary.

Education and Prevention Strategies
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:

- Each teacher will create a safe and caring classroom environment where the rules, rights and responsibilities of all are equally respected. **Appendix 1 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate**
- In the first term each year we will hold an anti-bullying awareness week where strategies are put in place.
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is the overarching context for anti-bullying work in schools. SPHE is designed to promote the personal development and well being of students and time will be allocated to focus on issues around bullying including conflict resolution, friendship, safety and relationships. Some of the resources the school uses to cover all areas of the SPHE Curriculum are the Walk Tall Programme and the Stay Safe Programme.
- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught in 2nd- 6th class.
- SPHE lessons (including Stay Safe lessons in 2nd-6th class) will teach the children about staying safe online and will address the issue of Cyber Bullying.
- The school will run Internet safety week which will involve internet safety talks for children and parents. Lessons will also be taught during this week using webwise.ie.

(While the school acknowledges its role in the prevention of bullying and the education of our students about all forms of bullying, we also stress the role of parents/guardians in the supervision and education of their own children including the specific responsibility of parents to supervise and monitor their children's use of social media and communication technology.)

- Since the failure to report bullying can lead to a continuation or a deterioration of bullying, the school and parents encourage children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. This can be with the class teacher, the teacher on yard duty at the time, Special Needs Assistants, the principal or with parents. This is a "telling school" as defined in the Stay Safe Programme. Children will therefore be constantly assured that their reports of bullying either for themselves or peers will be treated with sensitivity. All children including bystanders can report any bullying behaviour to any adult at O Connell Primary school. Children will be taught that there are no innocent bystanders where bullying is concerned. They will be taught that there is a big difference between telling tales and asking for help. They will be taught to act as proactive and positive bystanders, telling adults when they witness bullying or are the victims of bullying.

Procedures for investigation of alleged bullying

The school's procedures for investigation of bullying behaviour are as follows:
1. All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher (class teacher/principal/deputy principal/support teacher).

2. Incidents are usually best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure privacy of all involved.
3. When investigating an alleged incident of bullying behaviour, the teacher will seek answers to who, where, when and why.
4. On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the relevant teacher dealing with it will first interview the alleged victim/s.
5. An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator/s. 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.
6. Each child will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other children after interview by the teacher.
7. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
8. If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will 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.
9. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.
10. The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportion blame).

Resolutions and sanctions

(i) Responsibility will be placed on all individuals involved to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.

(ii) It will be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, these sanctions are a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

(iii)The main purpose of these procedures is to resolve issues for the children concerned. If the perpetrator is contrite and genuinely wants to rectify the situation sanctions may not be needed. A graded approach is adopted where the measures employed match the gravity of the misbehaviour, the age of the children and the effect of the misbehaviour. The main sanctions to be implemented in instances of bullying will be drawn from the official School Code of Behaviour, up to and including a maximum sanction of expulsion (in consultation with the Board of Management) with the right of appeal. Where the school deems it necessary, it may suggest to parents/ guardians/ significant adults that a referral is made for professional help.

(iv) Sanctions will be imposed at the discretion of the school.

Methods of Intervention

This school will use a combination of the following methods of intervention in cases of bullying

1. The Traditional Disciplinary Approach – this approach seeks to prevent bullying from continuing by imposing sanctions on the pupil/s who were engaged in bullying behaviour. Sanctions will be drawn from the official school Code of Behaviour.
2. Strengthening the victim - This approach to dealing with cases of bullying aims at assisting the pupil who is bullied to cope effectively in interactions with pupils engaged in bullying behaviour.
3. The No Blame Approach - this is a non-punitive approach and the emphasis is on getting the pupil involved in bullying behaviour to appreciate the suffering they have inflicted on the pupil who is bullied and on providing a solution to the problem rather than providing retribution for wrongdoing.

Follow Up

(i)The Class Teacher will monitor as necessary to seek to ensure that there is no repeat of bullying behaviour.

(ii) 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:
   o Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
   o Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
   o Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
   o Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

If Problems Persist
• If the steps taken above fail to achieve an end to bullying behaviour, separate meetings between the relevant teacher dealing with the problem and the parent/s of perpetrator/s and victim/s will take place to inform them of what has transpired, update them on the steps taken by the school, and to seek their support in arriving at a solution.
• In cases where individual pupils are repeatedly involved in incidents of bullying or in cases where serious incidents occur the school will give serious consideration to suspending or expelling pupils.
• 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;
• 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

Note
The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template (Appendix 2) 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.

What happens if the school determines that this is not bullying?

• If following a thorough investigation, the relevant teacher determines that bullying has not occurred he/she will inform the parents/guardians.
• Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
• In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows.
• The child will be praised for speaking out about the bullying situation.
• Close communication between the child's home and school will form a vital part in the child's recovery from being bullied. Regular contact between school and home will seek to ensure that problems have not persisted.
• Children who have engaged in bullying behaviour also need support to ensure that more positive behaviour patterns are developed and encouraged. The Class teacher and other staff members will work together to support the development of these positive behaviour patterns. Regular contact between school and home will seek to ensure that problems have not persisted.
• Depending on the circumstances children who have engaged in bullying behaviour may benefit from a specific social skills/behaviour programme and every effort will be made to facilitate this when appropriate.

The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management at Board of Management meetings setting out:

(i) The overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report to the Board.

(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.*

(iii) The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the above without any identifying details of the pupils involved.

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.

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 reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 12th January 2023.

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This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and 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 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: _Chris Purcell_____ Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: _Jan 23_

Date of next review: Januaury 2024

Appendix 1
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 2 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

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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

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	Other (specify)

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8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9.   Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____