

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY FOR GAELSCOIL DARA

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 Gaelscoil Dara 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.

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Dara 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
 - acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment
- 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; and
 - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- promote positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility
- Recognise the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

- Supports for staff;
- regular discussion and review of policy and procedures is essential
- Staff are aware that supporting one another is a key aspect of prevention and new/inexperienced can only benefit from such support
- 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.

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
- 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*.

General Behaviours that Apply to All Forms of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils but is by no means a comprehensive list:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation and Threats:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, offensive graffiti, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.
- **Relational:** Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip; spreading rumours, "bitching", the "look", breaking confidences or giving the "silent treatment".
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, *Snapchat*, chat-rooms and other online technologies.

- Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's appearance, dress etc.
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling or slagging directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling or "nicknaming" of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. size or clothes worn.
- Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention.
- Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, possessions, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's schoolbag or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.
- **Identity-based bullying** such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community, social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs. Mimicking a person's disability or setting others up for ridicule.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying (as sanctioned by *An Bord Bainistíochta Ghaelscoil Dara*) are as follows:

- Principal – Máirtín Ó Ceallacháin
- Assistant Principal – Martina Ní Shúilleabháin

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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

1. The school will promote respect for every member of the school community.
2. The school will ensure that all relevant members of the school community have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
3. As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, the school will, through curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
4. Staff awareness is promoted annually and provides an opportunity for staff to engage with each other on this subject.
5. Gaelscoil Dara uses the SPHE curriculum and makes specific provision to explore bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The *Stay Safe* is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. This programme is visited annually in all classes.
6. A copy of Anti-Bullying Policy is available to all parents/guardians on the school website.
7. The school management and staff recognise the importance of good supervision and monitoring measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour. Good supervision and monitoring systems also facilitate early intervention. Therefore, the pupils are adequately supervised at all times in classroom, in the yard, on field trips and on school tours. Non-teaching staff also play a vital role in this supervision and should report incidences to the appropriate teacher or Principal.
8. Senior pupils are encouraged to engage with younger children and to monitor them during break times. They are also encouraged to give good example at all times.

9. Encourage a culture of “telling”. It will be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidences of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales, but are behaving in a responsible way. Ensure that children know who to tell and how to tell, going to the class teacher at a suitable time for example after class, bringing in a written note with the home work, telling a parent or guardian or a friend who can act on their behalf.

Parents are also encouraged to approach the school if their child is being bullied.

Temporary and substitute staff are made aware of the school’s code of behaviour and its anti-bullying policy.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

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.

- The school procedures should be followed as outlined in this policy
- All efforts will be made to ensure that all parties (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand these procedures from the start

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports will be investigated.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff should report any incident of bullying witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and Dealing with Incidents

- The relevant teacher, when investigating and dealing with bullying, will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved using a calm problem solving approach.

- Parents/guardians and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues.
- Wherever possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- 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 an end. The relevant teacher reserves the right to consult with other members of staff if deemed appropriate
- Gaelscoil Dara, through the relevant teacher reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- 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. Other children who did not participate in the incidents may be called upon to divulge any relevant information that they might have.
- The relevant teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats 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 written promise that it will stop. If this promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved in so far as is practicable, the relevant teacher will complete a report on the template provided and give it to *An Príomhoide*
- If a pupil gives an undertaking to desist from bullying behaviour but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake". In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign a written promise given by their son or daughter. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very

grave matter and a serious sanction, including suspension, may be imposed by the school authorities. This will be done in consultation with the parents/guardians.

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
- The ultimate aim is an ending of identified bullying behaviour.

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, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on the 11/10/2021.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to *Coiste na dTuistí* . 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.