

Woodland National School

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

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 Woodland National School has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour. This policy complies with the requirements of *the Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

2. Principles of Best Practice

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) 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.
- b) Effective leadership.
- c) A school-wide approach.
- d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- e) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- g) Supports for staff.
- h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
- i) Ongoing 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 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 shall 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 may 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. Relevant Personnel

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying will be:

- Relevant Class teacher(s)
- Principal
- Deputy Principal

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

The school's prevention and awareness raising strategies will be appropriate to the type of bullying and will take into account the age and stage of development of the pupils involved.

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:

- a) The school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect, empathy and tolerance.
- b) The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum is used throughout the school to support the anti-bullying policy. This curriculum will incorporate programmes such as the Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme, Circle time, 'Friends for Life', Buddy System, Circle of Friends.
- c) Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- d) Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others. This may be done through the use of strategies such as Circle Time and specific lessons on the topic of self esteem and awareness.

- e) Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- f) Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- g) Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.
- h) Use of both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable e.g. visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), co-operative games etc.
- i) All pupils will be encouraged to understand the causes and effects of bullying behaviour.
- j) For infant classes, education and prevention strategies will focus on positive behaviour, being kind to others and telling teacher or other school staff if any problems or worries arise in school. Inputs from programmes such as the 'Stay Safe' programme and the Religious Education programme will complement this approach.
- k) Visual cues will reinforce anti-bullying and positive behavioural messages delivered in class – posters/ pupil-designed posters, art, essays or pupil commentaries will be displayed on a notice-board dedicated to promoting anti-bullying.
- l) Age appropriate library books will be purchased to foster respect for differences; being kind to others; understanding the effect that bullying behaviour can have on others e.g. the 'Golden Rule' Books.
- m) Educational awareness measures aimed at senior classes and which focus on Cyber-Bullying, will focus on discussion of appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and on reporting any concerns to a trusted adult in school or at home.
- n) Fostering a school culture which is respectful of all differences; including children with special educational needs (SEN), will incorporate social inclusion measures to prevent isolation and encourage integration, developing social skills reinforcing and rewarding good behaviour in all pupils.
- o) Opportunities for curricular integration and cross-curricular approaches will be used where appropriate to foster a wider understanding of the positive and negative effects of behaviour. As this is a Catholic School, an important emphasis will be placed on the spiritual aspect of our lives and our modelling of Christian behaviour with others. Literacy opportunities will be availed of to draw attention to cause and effect of conflict, which can be reinforced in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) as appropriate.
- p) Special events such as Anti-Bullying days/week.
- q) In relation to Cyber-Bullying, the school will accommodate visiting speakers on the subject.
- r) Woodland National School's Code of Behaviour expressly prohibits the use of mobile technology on school premises, thereby acting as the primary strategy for the prevention of Cyber-Bullying. However, the effects of Cyber-Bullying will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour.
- s) The Board of Management will review the Policy annually.
- t) Annual review of data collected throughout the year and analysis of results.

6. Investigation, Recording and Follow-up Procedures

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used for the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- a) The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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).
- b) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- c) In recognising the sensitivities for parents and pupils associated with being notified of an alleged bullying incident/behaviour, 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. Co-operation is understood to mean timely and constructive engagement with the relevant teacher upon notification of the alleged bullying incident/behaviour.
- d) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must 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.
- e) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- f) 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.
- g) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.
- h) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- i) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- j) All interviews should 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 regarding the alleged incident(s).
- k) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- l) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met 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.
- m) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed by the teacher;
- n) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- o) 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.
- p) 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 (as outlined in 5(b)).

- q) It must 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.
- r) 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- s) Teachers investigating a possible case of bullying will keep their own notes and will inform the Principal at this time. If the teacher confirms that an incidence of bullying has taken place, he/she will then record the information on the recording template contained in the guidelines.
- t) 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:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable, and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
 - 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.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

Supports for Affected Pupils

- a) Consultation with parents regarding the appropriate support for their child.
- b) The following strategies may be used in class: Circle time, Drama, Art, ICT etc. In some instances, the child may be absent for some or all of certain lessons.
- c) Focussed whole class lessons where appropriate to help the pupil cope.
- d) Activities will be appropriate to the age level of the students e.g. the 'Buddy System' may be used in younger classes.
- e) Pupils may need opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. The SPHE curriculum may be used in conjunction with the following programmes: Walk Tall, Stay Safe, 'Friends for Life', RSE Programme, Buddy System.
- f) Other services e.g. mediation may be used.
- g) In the case of children for whom bullying is having a serious impact which cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in school, consultation will be made with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) as to whether formal referral to an outside, specialist agency (e.g. Child Adolescent and Mental Health Service – CAMHS) may be necessary in order to support the pupil(s) concerned.
- h) Similar strategies may be used for pupils who are engaged in bullying behaviour.

Supports for Staff

The Board of Management through the Principal will ensure that members of school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required. Supports for staff should be appropriate to the individual's role and should enable staff to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.

The Board of Management through the Principal will also make necessary arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's Code of Behaviour and its Anti-Bullying Policy.

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

* This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 3rd February 2014

* This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, provided to the Parents' Association and communicated to all parents at enrolment. Each existing family will receive a hard copy of the revised Policy. The implementation of a successful Anti-Bullying policy will require the full, timely and constructive engagement of parents as alleged bullying incidents/behaviour are notified. Enrolment in Woodland National School will infer an acceptance by parents to support the full implementation of the policy and any future revisions thereof.

* 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 of Education.

Signed: Susan Kenny
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 06/07/2022

Signed: Patricia Slevin
(Principal)

Date: 06/07/2022

Date of next review: December 2022

Appendix A

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur:

Physical Aggression:

Pushing, shoving, kicking, hitting, nipping, spitting, tripping, punching, poking, etc.

Verbal:

Name-calling, teasing, insulting, humiliating, etc.

Emotional:

Making threats, spreading rumours, excluding, ignoring, etc.

Non-Verbal:

Making suggestive, provocative or intimidating gestures, etc.

Cyber-Bullying:

Sending threatening or upsetting text messages or images by mobile phone or computer (including social networking sites) etc. With regard to Cyber-Bullying, new communications technologies have opened up new ways for pupils to be bullied. These forms of bullying can reach deeper into a child's personal life because the act of bullying may not take place face-to-face.

Personal Property:

Threats against or damage to a person's property, etc.

The above list of examples is non-exhaustive and only contains some of the possible examples of bullying behaviour which may be occurring.

Appendix B

Useful tips and websites for Parents:

- a) If Parents become aware that their child is being bullied, or are concerned that they may be engaging in bullying behaviour, you should talk to them openly. Bullying on a mobile phone may signal that a child is being bullied face-to-face as well. Parents should take the steps they consider most appropriate if they discover their child is being bullied.
- b) Thank the child for disclosing the problem.
- c) Listen carefully and write down all the details.
- d) Follow agreed procedure of this Policy.
- e) Seek professional help if needed.
- f) Bring your information to the relevant authorities.

- g) One of the most terrible effects of bullying is that the victim will very often deny that it's happening.
- h) It's important that you don't put even more pressure on a child who may be bullied.
- i) Forcing someone to tell when they don't want to can in itself be a form of bullying.

Websites

- a) Anti-Bullying Centre in Trinity College, Dublin gives advice and guidance to parents in relation to bullying. Phone: 01-8962573 / 01-8963488. Web : www.abc.tcd.ie
- b) National Parents' Council provides support, including training on Anti-Bullying to parents. Phone: 01-8874477. Web : www.npc.ie
- c) Barnardos is a family support agency. Its website contains advice in relation to bullying and parenting. Phone: 1850-222300. Web : www.barnardos.ie
- d) ICAP provides lists of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists. Phone: 01-2723427 Web: www.iacp.ie
- e) Department of Education website : www.education.ie
- f) Tips for Teens website : www.schooldays.ie
- g) Irish Cellular Industry Association : www.icia.ie
- h) Donegal Youth Service (for cyberbullying) www.donegalyouthservice.ie

Appendix C

Linked Policies

A number of other Policies are closely linked to the Anti-Bullying Policy:

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Social and Personal Health Education Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy