



Anti-Bullying Policy

1. 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 Rath NS has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the frame work of the school's overall code of behaviour. The policy fully complies with requirements of the Anti –Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post –Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

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 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, involves collaboration among and between staff and pupils and 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 and 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
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy).
3. In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools bullying is defined as follows:

- ‘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 hurtful text message 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, imaged or statement can be viewed and /or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Examples of bullying behaviours

- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical aggression – pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.
- Damage to property
- Name calling
- Slagging
- The Production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
- Offensive Graffiti
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Insulting or offensive gestures
- The ‘Look’
- Invasion of personal space
- A combination of any of the types listed

Cyber Bullying

- **Denigration:** spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- **Harassment:** Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual
- **Impersonation:** Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
- **Flaming:** Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
- **Outing:** Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images
- **Exclusion:** Purposefully excluding someone from an online group
- **Cyber stalking:** On going harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
- Silent telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive email
- Abusive communication on social networks e.g. facebook/Ask .fm/Twitter/You tube or on games consoles
- Abusive websites comments/blogs/pictures
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

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:
 - The class teacher (s) initially
 - The principal thereafter if necessary
 - Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. **The following education and prevention strategies, at the appropriate and relevant level for each class, will be used by the school:**
 - Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and that involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
 - Prevention and awareness raising measures focusing on cyber- bullying by educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online
 - Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner

- There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect, diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour.
 - The work could be extended into many other areas such as art, drama, Religious Education and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, schools clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects.
 - Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. GAA and soccer coaching is offered to some classes from outside agencies and teachers are also involved in coaching the school's soccer and gaelic teams.
 - Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
 - The fostering and enhancing of self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
 - Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
 - The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/ guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year)
6. *The school's procedures for investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour and established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows,*

- 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 apportion blame)

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any pupil or parents(s) /guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non- teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, 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

1. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher (s) will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation be resolved.
2. 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.
3. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
4. Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
5. 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 in this way.
6. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) should seek answers to questions of what, 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.
7. 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.

8. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other member of the group after interview by the teacher.
9. Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have 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 for the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
10. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
11. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) 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 action being taken. 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 provided to the pupils.
12. 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.

Follow up and recording

1. Follow up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with the view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
2. An additional follow-up meeting with the parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactory.
3. 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 procedure.
4. 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.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal – pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

Formal stage 1 – Determination that bullying has occurred

- 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.

Formal stage 2

- **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.

The school should list behaviours that must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal. These should be in line with the school's code of behaviour

When the recording template is used it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal.

Records will be kept in the incident book in the filing cabinet.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows: (see section 6.8.16 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.

- Circle time
- S.P.H.E.
- Talk on anti- bullying

- If pupils require counselling or further support the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

- 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 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 harassments 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
- Membership of the Traveller Community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 05-03-2014

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parent's Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and 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. A record of the review its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: *Fr. Chris O' Donovan*

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: *Máire Ní Choileáin*

(Principal)

Date: **05-03-2014**

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This is reviewed yearly by the Board of Management

Current review – March 2021

