

St Conleth & Mary's National School

Anti-bullying policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the [Education \(Welfare\) Act 2000](#) and the [Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools](#) issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St Conleth and Mary's National School (hereinafter referred to as 'the 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.
2. The Board of Management of the school adopts the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) issued by the Department of Education and Skills (September 2013) as the basis for the way in which the school community addresses the issue of bullying.
3. The Board of Management of the school recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of either pupils or staff and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
 - I. 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.
 - II. Effective leadership.
 - III. A school-wide approach.
 - IV. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
 - V. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that:
 - ✓ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils,
 - ✓ Explicitly addresses the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying,
 - ✓ Includes, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - VI. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
 - VII. Supports for staff.
 - VIII. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
 - IX. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

4. What is 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 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 [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).

5. To whom should concerns about a pupil being bullied be reported – relevant teacher investigates and deals with allegations of bullying?

Pupils, parents, non-teaching staff or members of the public should report their concerns to any member of the teaching staff – including the Principal and Deputy Principal.

The member of the teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher who is known as the 'relevant teacher' in the context of Section 6.8.3 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) – see [Section 7.0](#) below. The 'Relevant Teachers' for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school are the class teacher, the principal and the deputy principal.

6. Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying – Section 6.5 of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)

6.1 The school makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a pupil, a staff member or any other person that is the subject of such behaviour.

6.2 While investigating and dealing with bullying the **principal focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame)**, the school nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action, where such is warranted, in accordance with its Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.

- 6.3 The prevention and awareness of bullying is integral to this policy and pupils and all the school's curricular and extra-curricular programmes provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- 6.4 The focus of the school's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- 6.5 Pupils will be provided with opportunities to understand in an age appropriate way the causes and effects of bullying. This will comprehend the issue of identity-based bullying.

The school recognises that 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 and relationships. It also recognises that the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. The school will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

Furthermore, it is recognised that there is potential within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all: - to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying, including cyberbullying behaviour.

- 6.6 Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyberbullying through educating pupils about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of cyberbullying to a member of the teaching staff.
- 6.7 The school will make every effort to highlight the importance of pupils reporting incidents of or concerns about bullying to a member of the teaching staff on the clear understanding that these matters are being reported in confidence. More than anything else, the combating of bullying will depend on the extent to which pupils note and report bullying. In this context, the happiness of individual pupils is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow pupils and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying to the teaching staff. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to pupils on an ongoing basis.
- 6.8 The school will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents/guardians, pupils and members of the wider community with a connection to the school) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, the school is committed to engaging with parents. Firstly, the school will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly, the school will undertake information briefings annually for parents (letters to parents about anti-bullying, friendship weeks, organised talks around bullying and cyber bullying, videos, presentations, etc.) to ensure that they understand the way the school deals with bullying, and to provide them with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying. **In this regard, it is important that parents realise that anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully.** Here, it is important to realise that disagreements between children are part and parcel of childhood and that every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode.

- 6.9 In accordance with 6.8.9 (v) of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) ‘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**’.
- 6.10 Non-teaching staff such as secretaries/admin, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are strongly encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant (class) teacher. In the event that the relevant (class) teacher is unavailable then the incident should be reported to the school principal or deputy principal who will brief the relevant (class) teacher upon their return.
- 6.11 The school will engage with school bus drivers and others who come in daily contact with its pupils to enlist them in countering bullying behaviour by reporting it to parents and/or the school.
- 6.12 Where necessary the school will seek the assistance of NEPS, the HSE and the Gardáí, as appropriate, to combat bullying.
- 6.13 In combating bullying, the school will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to pupil induction, and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
- 6.14 The school will devote a staff awareness session (for teaching and non-teaching staff – as appropriate) each school year towards: raising the awareness of bullying among staff, building an understanding of what bullying is and providing guidance on how it is best combatted – prevented, detected, investigated, documented (as appropriate) and resolved. This session will also provide opportunities for exploring the potential that exists within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all, to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping, and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. Information on the schools anti-bullying policy will also be included in the staff induction booklet.

A clear focus of all staff development around combating bullying will be the enablement of all staff to implement this policy and the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) consistently and effectively. Here, there will be a particular emphasis on providing teachers with the skills and awareness to **restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved, rather than apportioning blame.**

- 6.15 The school is committed to surveying the pupil body at least annually in an age-appropriate way to identify the extent of bullying and, in so far as is possible, the pupils that are affected by it.
- 6.16 The school’s RSE and SPHE programmes will specifically address the issue of bullying with each class group each year.
- 6.17 The school will each year get involved with [Safer Internet Day](#) (SID), an EU wide initiative to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people. This is promoted in Ireland by the PDST Technology in Education and Webwise.

- 6.18 The school will run at least one anti-bullying awareness week or friendship week each year to highlight the whole issue of bullying, positive behaviour and staying safe using modern technology.
- 6.19 In building a school-wide understanding of bullying and preventing bullying in the school, the school will avail of the resources/services provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers ([PDST](#)) and third-party service providers such as [Sticks and Stones](#), [Zeeko](#), etc.

7. School's Procedures for investigating, following up and recording bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour - see Section 6.8.9 of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).

7.1 Where a relevant (class) teacher has a concern about a pupil being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, s/he should investigate and deal with the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 6.8.9 of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). **These are summarised at 7.6 below.**

7.2 In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, teachers are welcome to seek the assistance and support of the principal and/or deputy principal at any time. Indeed, given the extent to which the principal and deputy principal are privy to all kinds of information about pupils, it would be prudent to check in with them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.

7.3 Where a teacher is concerned that a particular bullying episode is causing serious upset to a pupil, staff member or other person, s/he **should bring it to the attention of either the Principal or Deputy Principal** at the earliest possible opportunity.

7.4 The school reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or happiness of a pupil in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school.

In the event of a complaint of bullying the school reserves the right to examine any P.E.D or mobile phone for the purpose of investigating any allegation of bullying.

7.5 The school reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the school deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)) it must consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).

7.6 Investigating and addressing concerns about or allegations of bullying in accordance with Section 6.8.9 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). These are summarised as follows.

- a. In investigating and dealing with bullying the relevant teacher will focus on **resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved, rather than apportioning blame.**
- b. 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.
- c. All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. This will build the confidence of pupils in 'telling' about bullying. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report bullying, they are not telling tales **BUT behaving responsibly.**
- d. All involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will comply with relevant data protection legislation. Put simply, this means individual privacy is protected, **data relating to individual is stored securely, and information about individuals is only provided to those who have right to receive it. Confidentiality is critical to ensuring compliance with data protection law.**
- e. **In investigating and resolving bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will note and report developments as follows:**
 - The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement regarding the records to be kept of information received, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved with the bullying behaviour.
 - Where the relevant teacher establishes that bullying has occurred, s/he must keep appropriate written records to assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
 - **The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:**
 - a) Where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed **within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred;** and
 - b) Where it is necessary to report serious bullying behaviour immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal - **see 7.3 above.**In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 1** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

Please note that, at any point in either investigating or resolving a bullying matter, the relevant teacher may seek advice and support from the principal and/or deputy principal while retaining responsibility for dealing with the matter.

Furthermore:

- All incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.
- Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of pupils, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated.
- Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each pupil will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, where appropriate, all involved will be met as a group and, at this meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that all are clear about what each individual pupil is saying.
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that s/he may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed.
- Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened.
- Where the relevant teacher investigating a bullying issue determines 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 to 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.
- Where the relevant teacher determines 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/s being bullied.
- Where the school in consultation with the relevant teacher deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying) and their parents/guardians that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents and the school.
- As a follow up to a bullying issue being resolved, the relevant teacher should meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress. Subsequently, but only if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, consideration should be given to meeting with both parties simultaneously as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- Where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the bullying

incident must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 1**.

- 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.
 - ⇒ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school principal or deputy principal.
- Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the Department of Education's [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#), s/he will be referred to the school's complaints procedures. The grounds for any appeal under these procedures shall be the school's failure to deal with the alleged bullying issue in accordance with the Department of Education's [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).
- Where a parent/guardian, having exhausted his/her rights under the school's complaints procedures, is still not satisfied, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8.0 Programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying - see Sections 6.8.15, 6.8.16 and 6.8.17 of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).

8.1 The school will put in place a programme of supports for pupils who have been bullied. This programme will involve the following elements.

- Pupils who have been bullied will be:
 - ✓ offered appropriate support – where necessary in consultation/collaboration with relevant agencies.
 - ✓ provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.
- Pupils who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be:
 - ✓ provided with appropriate support (where necessary in consultation/collaboration with relevant agencies) to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others,
 - ✓ provided with appropriate opportunities to build their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers and their parents and to avail of support where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced.

9.0 Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in the School

- The school 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.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy will be an agenda item for all staff meetings – so the concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.
- Data gathered through the reporting templates (**Appendix 1**) will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through the bullying surveys – see Section [6.15](#).
- At least once in every school term, The Principal will provide a report to the board of management setting out the following.
 - ✓ The overall number of bullying cases reported by means of the bullying recording template (see **Appendix 1**) since the previous report to the Board.
 - ✓ Confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template(**Appendix 1**) 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](#).Besides, the minutes of board of management meetings will record the principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

10.0 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.

11.0 Policy Adoption and Review

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 (or where none exists be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

12.0 Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

13.0 Policy Review

- The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in

Section 7.2 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) using the checklist included at **Appendix 4** of those procedures.

- The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.
- 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.
- Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department of Education. In the case of the Department of Education, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the school takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

14.0 This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 18 October 2022

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: _____ Date of next review: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

APPENDIX 1

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	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

--

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 Com.	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its target

--

9. Details of actions taken

--

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.