

# PRIMROSE HILL NATIONAL SCHOOL

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### **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 Primrose Hill National 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.

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;
- 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
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
- 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, transphobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community, bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs and gender-based bullying.

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*.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Any member of teaching staff.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic, transphobic and gender-based bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- School-wide approach etc.
- Fostering respect in accordance with school ethos
- Adult modelled behaviours
- Promote value of diversity
- Foster self-esteem
- Whole staff development / training in anti-bullying
- Good supervision systems in class and out
- Display anti-bullying code in school and website and issue all parents on entry to school
- Encourage culture of telling and the importance of bystanders

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

- Ensure pupils know how and who to tell
- Ensure parents report incidents of bullying and have a clear protocol.
- Ensure children and parents accept the Acceptable Use Policy of the school.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying:

- (i) 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);

- (ii) 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;
- (iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher (usually the class 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (viii) When the teacher is satisfied that bullying has occurred, incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (ix) 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;
- (x) 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;
- (xi) 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;
- (xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xiii) Those involved will be asked to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (xiv) 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;
- (xv) 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. At any stage during the investigations, the Chairperson of the Board of Management may wish to attend meetings with the relevant parties.

- (xvi) It will 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;
- (xvii) 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;
- (xviii) In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the standard recording template.
- (xix) 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
- (xx) 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;
- (xxi) 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.

#### **Procedures for recording bullying behaviour.**

Where it is established that bullying took place or where accusations of bullying have been investigated, all written items in relation to the case will be held for the duration of the child/children's enrolment in our school. These will include the teacher's notes (written in a dedicated incident notebook held in the Principal's office).

#### **Adult Bullying**

There is currently no uniform definition of workplace bullying available. The INTO policy document *Staff Relations: a Report on Adult Bullying in Schools* relies on the definition that bullying is "repeated aggressive behaviour of a verbal, physical or psychological nature". The document presents a range of other definitions in use by various unions and organisations and also describes the forms and effects of bullying and profiles both the typical victim and bully.

Adult bullying can take many different forms which usually include:

1. intimidation or harassment
2. aggression
3. verbal abuse
4. humiliation
5. undermining
6. dominance or abuse of power
7. different or unfavourable treatment

## 8. exclusion or isolation

Key features of adult bullying are that the behaviour is generally:

- persistent and/or systematic
- unwanted
- subtle
- non-physical

However, for the purposes of the procedures outlined in this document, management and INTO have adopted the definition of bullying set out by the Health and Safety Authority which is:

*“Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons. Bullying is where aggression or cruelty, viciousness, intimidation or a need to humiliate, dominate the relationship. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while to be condemned, should not be described as bullying. In the workplace environment there can be conflicts and interpersonal difficulties. Many of these are legitimate industrial relations difficulties which should be dealt with through the appropriate industrial relations channels. Only aggressive behaviour which is systematic and ongoing should be regarded as bullying.”*

Accordingly, it is the view of INTO and management, that the exercise of legitimate management functions, in a reasonable and fair manner does not constitute bullying.

The procedure outlined below is designed to address adult bullying, sexual harassment or other harassment arising in the workplace or otherwise in the course of employment, in a fair and effective manner. In implementing the procedure, it is recommended that emphasis should be placed on assuring the party who considers that he/she is being bullied/harassed that his/her complaint is acknowledged, that the matter will be investigated effectively and sensitively and in accordance with due process. Equally, where it is found that bullying or harassment has occurred, the emphasis, firstly, is to ensure that the offending behaviour immediately ceases and secondly, to help the offending party acknowledge that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and that steps must be taken to address the matter constructively thereby avoiding any recurrence.

It is important to ensure that resolution is achieved at the earliest opportunity. Further, it may be appropriate for the victim or the offender to attend counselling or obtain such other help as may be required.

### **Stage 1 – Decide to address the matter**

1. The party (party A) who considers that he/she is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other specified discriminatory grounds, should decide to address the matter. However, in light of the potential effects of bullying or harassment on an individual, including loss of confidence, extreme upset, anxiety or fear, party A may initially decide to seek INTO or other assistance, Spectrum Life (Free phone 1800 411 057), or other counselling, in order to consider the most appropriate application of the procedures, in the circumstances.
2. Party A should keep a record of the pattern of behaviour or instances where he/she considers that bullying/harassment has occurred. The record should contain details such as dates, times, persons present, details of what was said or what occurred.

## **Stage 2 – Informally address the problem**

The party who considers that he/she is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other discriminatory grounds (party A), should request a meeting with the other party (B), in order to discuss matters. The following should apply:

- Where necessary, the meeting may be facilitated by a third party, generally a teaching colleague, or an agreed Third Party.
- Party A should clearly outline his/her difficulties and should clearly object to the bullying/harassment and request that it stop;
- It is important that party A bear in mind, that the other adult may not be aware that his/her behaviour is causing difficulty;
- Both parties should seek to resolve their differences and establish a pattern of interaction exclusive of any forms of bullying/harassment;
- Party B may respond to Party A at that meeting or if requested, should be given an opportunity to consider his/her response, in which case the meeting may be adjourned. Party B should respond in a constructive manner;
- The resolution, as appropriate, may include any of the following, e.g. a commitment to cease the particular behaviour, modify the behaviour, plan to eliminate situations where the parties would be in conflict or monitoring. Alternatively, it may emerge as a result of the discussions between the parties, that there may have been a degree of misunderstanding in relation to certain behaviours and the resolution may make provision for compromise or appropriate explanation or acknowledgement.
- If there is no satisfactory indication of resolution between the parties, party A should refer the complaint to stage 3, i.e. formal procedures.

## **Stage 3 – Principal Teacher or Chairperson of the Board of Management**

1. Stage 3 provides a mechanism for the principal teacher to intervene and resolve the matter. However, if the Principal Teacher is one of the parties, the Chairperson of the Board of Management, should then be involved, in an individual capacity, in order to achieve resolution. In circumstances where the Chairperson may also be involved at Stage 2, another member of the Board may be designated to intervene.
2. Party A should advise party B that he/she is proceeding with Stage 3.
3. Party A should state his/her complaint in writing and request the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) to investigate the matter.
4. The Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) should:
  - obtain background details including details of what occurred at the previous stage;
  - consider the pattern of behaviour and the timescale;
  - hear the parties and seek to resolve the matter;
  - act in a fair and impartial manner and deal with the matter sensitively having regard to the nature of the problem and the principles of due process;
  - exercise judgement and make decisions which he/she considers necessary to resolve matters.
5. The outcome of the discussions should be noted by the parties.
  - The matter should be dealt with confidentially.
  - Where resolution has not been possible and particularly, where there is a likelihood of the offending behaviour continuing, either party or the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management as the case may be) should refer the matter to the Board of Management in accordance with Stage 4 below.

#### **Stage 4 – Board of Management**

1. It is open to any of the parties or the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) to refer the matter to the Board of Management for investigation. The referral should be in writing and dated and should include a copy of the written complaint.
2. The Board of Management should consider the issues and investigate the matter.
  - The Board may enquire into the background of the difficulties including obtaining details on the sequence of initiatives taken at previous stages.
  - The Board or the Chairperson of the Board may meet both parties individually or collectively and may also request written submissions from the parties, having regard also to the principles of due process.
  - The Board may request the Principal Teacher to furnish a written submission.
  - The Board may afford the parties an opportunity to present their case orally at a Board Meeting, in each other's presence. Following oral presentations the Board of Management may designate the Chairperson to meet with the parties again, separately or jointly, if further clarification is required or to work towards resolution. The Board of Management may convene a number of meetings in order to achieve resolution.
  - The Board of Management shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem.
3. Having considered all matters, the Board of Management should reach a view on the matter not later than 20 school days after receipt of the written request/referral.
4. Where the Board of Management finds that bullying/harassment has not occurred, both parties should be informed accordingly. No action shall be taken against the complainant provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and appropriate action taken.
5. Where the Board of Management finds that bullying/harassment has occurred, the Board should deal with the matter appropriately and effectively. This may include:
  - the issuing of a clear warning that bullying/harassment is not acceptable in the school workplace and that it will not be tolerated;
  - a demand that all forms of bullying/harassment cease and that acceptable patterns of interaction be established between the parties;
  - an instruction to the offending party that he/she apologise/ express regret or give an assurance that the bullying/harassment behaviour will cease;
  - seeking a commitment to attend counselling or the welfare service
  - more serious disciplinary sanctions as may be commensurate and appropriate, such as –
    - oral warning
    - written reprimand
    - written warning
    - final written warning
    - suspension
    - dismissal/barring.
6. As part of any resolution, the Board of Management should monitor the situation and should put systems in place to ensure that it is kept informed that resolutions are being implemented. The Board of Management should keep matters under review.

Signed

Signed

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**Chairperson, Board of Management**

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**School Principal**

Issued: February 2008

Updated: November 2015, February 2017, October 2022