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Bóthar an Mhuilinn  
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## Anti-Bullying Policy

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## **Rationale**

The rationale behind this Anti-Bullying policy is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and all in the school community by taking a strong stance against bullying, both by preventing and dealing with it, and to ensure correct procedures are followed by staff members in this area.

## **Aims of this policy:**

This policy document aims to:

- Identify Key Staff and their responsibilities
- Outline the guiding principles of our anti-bullying policy
- Detail what bullying is and how it may occur
- Identify the procedures to be taken to investigate, record and follow up on incidences of bullying

## **Policy ratification and communication:**

This policy was formulated by Siobhán Ní Dhúill (Principal) and Hannah Ní Ghréacháin and includes input from the staff, the Board of Management and Parents Association and advice from 'Antibullying Centre, DCU'. This policy will be available to the wider school community via the school website ([www.gaelscoilanbhradainfeasa.com](http://www.gaelscoilanbhradainfeasa.com)). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Ratified by Board of Management on: 26 Meán Fómhair 2017

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Cathal Mac Cearáin (Cathaoirleach)

## Review Timetable and Associated Deadlines:

Monitoring of policy	Ongoing – informed by experience
Annual review	No later than November 2018
Incident reporting	Ongoing as required.

## Key Staff and Responsibilities

Siobhán Ní Dhúill	School Principal	Principal	Implementing the day-to-day operation of this policy
Hannah Ní Ghréacháin	Deputy Principal	Deputy Principal	Implementing the day-to-day operation of this policy
Cathal Mac Cearáin	Chairperson	Chairperson	Act on behalf of Board in implementing this policy

## Anti-Bullying Statement:

### 1.1 Introduction and Guiding Principles

The school community of Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s). Our 'Anti-Bullying Team,' consists of all members of the school community and exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is possible. O'Moore (2010) recommends sending a clear message to pupils that bullying behaviour is wrong and will not be tolerated by admonishing students displaying bullying behaviour and administering firm sanctions which deprive bullies of privileges. These methods work well in decreasing bullying behaviour in children under 11 years of age, whereas, empathy evoking restorative approaches can work well with older more cognitively developed children.

Reporting bullying is motivated by the need to help, and therefore is responsible behaviour. Bystanders should be encouraged to take immediate action to stop the bullying behaviour. This should take the form of telling the teacher on duty or another adult, or helping the targeted child to report it rather than getting directly involved. Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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 an Bhradáin Feasa has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy should be read in conjunction with our code of discipline and mobile phone and technology usage policy. 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 recognizes the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils including lasting consequences such as a higher risk of developing, depression, anxiety disorders and or an antisocial personality, along with decreased educational and occupational attainment are all possible variables of engaging in bullying behaviour (DES 2013). Victims, perpetrators and bystanders are all affected by bullying behaviour (O'Moore 2010; Olweus 1993) 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; 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 that:

- Raise awareness
- Build empathy, respect, resilience and self-esteem in pupils (Fostering the development of resilience will lessen the detrimental effects of bullying behaviour on pupils in schools and assist with positive youth development. O'Moore states, that the most effective tool against bullying is high self-esteem (O'Moore 2010). The harshness and duration of bullying can be determined by the victim, with victims with high self-esteem, due to peer friendships and supportive families, having the ability to put an end to bullying behaviour directed at them more easily.)
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying; Young people are rarely bullied because of their sameness, rather it is because of their differences to their peers. O'Higgins Norman (2008) promotes educating our children to the fact that diversity is a 'normal' part of life.
- 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
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

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.

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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.

## 1.2. 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.** (DES 2013)

The following types of 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. The school will follow up reports of cyber-bullying between pupils in the school and also reports from cyber-victims whose perpetrators belong to another school by contacting the school concerned in order to resolve the issue. However, where the perpetrator belongs to another school, our dependence is on the other school's commitment to work with Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa to resolve the bullying or cyber-bullying incident. Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa will provide emotional and practical support to all our pupils in so far as possible.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or

indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Bullying of children by staff or parents, bullying of parents by staff or children, and bullying of staff by children or parents also falls under the remit of this policy.

**Appendices & References 1.6** gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

**Bullies:** Bullies are not born they are made (O'Moore 2010). Children who bully, grow up to become adults who bully, unless there has been positive intervention into bullying behaviour.

Bullies have a positive attitude to violence and view aggression as a way of solving problems. They tend to be impulsive and have little empathy for victims, generally seeing bullying behaviour as fun.

**Victims:** Anybody can be a victim. O'Moore (2010) suggests, that it is not simply by 'being different' that makes children targets for victimisation but rather the manner in which they handle the bullying situation, stating that duration and level of bullying can be related to the victim's vulnerability. Sapouna and Wolke (2013) concur, stating that some victims are more resilient to the effects of bullying than others and can overcome any personal hurt more quickly. This is due to a number of factors such as positive relationships with friends, family and community.

## 1.2 Preventing Bullying

### **Naíonáin Bheaga / Mhóra**

In Naíonáin Bheaga and Naíonáin Mhóra children are developing through the pre-operational stage and are usually 'egocentric', meaning that they are only able to consider things from their own point of view, and imagine that everyone shares this view, because it is the only one possible. Gradually during this stage, a certain amount of 'decentering' occurs. This is when someone stops believing that they are the centre of the world, and they are more able to imagine that something or someone else could be the centre of attention.

**Bullying is about a pre-meditated act, which relies on a stage of cognitive development in order to think the process through, and occurs generally in children 5 years and over.**

Very young children are 'egocentric' which means that they put their own feelings before others, and even the most considerate child will have the occasional outburst due to frustration, anger or over exuberance. We acknowledge that this is a developmental area that needs to be nurtured and supported and that young children do not intentionally wish to cause hurt.

If unintentional or physical comments occur, our strategies are:

- To recognise that very young children are not always able to manage their own feelings or actions and deliver them appropriately
- To assist in management to support their biological and cognitive development.
- To offer support to both parties and to discuss the issues through play, story times and circle time activities.

**We implement the SPHE curriculum, reward positive behaviours using reward systems, use circle time, co-operative games etc. beginning in Naíonáin Bheaga and Naíonáin**

## **Mhóra to re-inforce good behaviour and positive classroom relationships and friendships.**

### **Rang 1-6**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme taught during each school year Naíonáin Bheaga –rang 6.
- For 1st to 6th classes a minimum of four awareness-raising exercises per school year for each classroom in a two year cycle ([www.antibullying.ie](http://www.antibullying.ie)) pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
  - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
  - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
  - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school. Pupils should be informed that they can tell their class teacher or any other trusted adult about bullying.
- Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the class teacher (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

Possible signs:

- *A combination of obvious anxiety and a refusal to say what is wrong*
- *An unwillingness to go to school*
- *Becomes more obedient*
- *Has a pattern of reporting headaches, stomach aches, minor illnesses (genuine or faked)*
- *Equipment and belongings regularly go missing or are damaged.*
- *Regular bruising, scratching, grazing that are unaccounted for.*
- *Develops high anxiety levels.*
- *Frequent mood swings*
- *Bad dreams, disturbed sleep, bed-wetting and sleep walking*
- *Unexplained tearfulness*

- *Becomes introspective, withdrawn*
- *Begins to stammer, bite nails, pull hair*
- *Apathy, loss of enthusiasm for previously enjoyed activities*
- *Gives improbable excuses to explain occurrences*
- *Poorer school performance*
- *Taking longer to get to school*
- *Acting out aggression*

Whilst research indicates that these characteristics are typical of children who have been bullied, it does not necessarily follow that if a child manifests a small number of these characteristics s/he is a target of bullying

### **Perpetrators of Bullying Behaviour**

Research indicates that the following characteristics are typical of children who bully others; again, it does not necessarily follow that if a child manifests a small number of these characteristics s/he is a perpetrator of bullying:

- *Usually lacks the ability to empathise with others*
- *Attitude and behaviour towards the family may become aggressive*
- *Frequently reported for fighting or aggressive behaviour in school*
- *Has pens, sports gear, other items belonging to others which can not be accounted for*
- *Frequently reported for damaging/taking other people's things*
- *Constantly tells lies about his/her behaviour*
- *Refuses to accept or admit that he/she has done wrong*
- *Has little sense of remorse*
- *Tells stories and makes remarks about others, which turn out to be untrue and are sometimes even malicious, to get them into trouble*
- *Other children are nervous in his/her presence*
- *Changes friends frequently*
- *May appear dominant*
- *May have a poor self image*
- *May demonstrate emotions of jealousy, envy, humiliation, shame, fear, anger, despair, confusion, distrust, apathy, feeling of unjust treatment, desire for revenge, resentment*
- *May show contempt for others*
- *May be spoilt and arrogant*
- *May appear to enjoy hurting others or seeing them suffer*
- *Low self esteem*
- *Lack of insight as to how behaviour affects others*
- *Low impulse control*



*Tendency to dominate peer groups*

#### **1.4 Procedures for investigation and recording of bullying (Rang 1-6)**

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:

Reporting bullying to the school:

- Parents are requested to report suspected bullying behaviour to class teacher. A detailed account of facts is preferable.
- Please allow time for class teacher to investigate and come back to you with findings and actions to be taken.
- If parents are unhappy with the class teacher's verdict, the next step is to report the incident to the school's anti-bullying co-ordinator.
- Please allow time for Anti-bullying co-ordinator to investigate and come back to you with actions to be taken.
- If parents are unhappy with the outcome, the next step is to report the incident in writing to the school's Board of Management.
- Again, please allow time for BOM to investigate and come back to you with actions to be taken.
- The school is committed to resolving bullying matters quickly and fairly. However, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of events, a written report can be made to the Ombudsman for Children.

1. Investigation by School Staff:
2. Interview with (alleged) victim. A detailed account will be taken and support will be assured throughout investigation.
3. Interview with (alleged) perpetrator. A detailed account will be taken and support will be assured throughout investigation.
4. Bystanders will also be interviewed. Research shows us that bullying occurs with bystanders present in 85% of cases.
5. After assessment of situation, there may be a number of outcomes. We have a duty of care to every pupil in our school. Each pupils' well-being is our priority.

#### **1.5 Sanctions and follow up:**

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, parents will be informed. It is distressing to discover that your child has been bullying others but it is

the actions of the bullying child that are disapproved of, not the child him/herself. Age appropriate sanctions will apply including:

- Loss of yard time
- Letters of apology
- Additional work
- Loss of fieldtrip opportunity
- Exclusion from peers – In class Suspension (designated chair located within the room in keeping with the spirit of the Discipline system)
- Referral of the child to senior staff or teaching team colleagues
- Withdrawal from representing school ( playing sport, choirs etc)
- Demand by school of Parental supervision on the way to and from school
- Suspension/Exclusion from school ( in compliance with the school Positive Behaviour Policy and the NEWB Guidelines for Schools)

**Sanctions will be imposed at the discretion of the school and it is not the role or privilege of the parent to insist or demand a particular course of sanction.**

The Principal in her report to the BOM will refer to the number and nature of the Bullying cases. In the annual evaluation of the Anti-BULLYING Policy the Principal in her BOM report will refer to the number and nature Bullying cases recorded.

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

### **Bullied pupils**

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Strengthening the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Strengthening the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

### **Bullying pupils**

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform get a “clean sheet,”
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet”.

## 1.6 Appendices & References

[www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie)

<http://www4.dcu.ie/abc/index.shtml>

### Types of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

#### **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**

- Shouting and uncontrolled anger,
- Personal insults or verbal abuse,
- Offensive language directed at an individual,
- Continually shouting or dismissing others,
- Public verbal attacks/criticism,
- Domineering behaviour,
- Open aggression,
- Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

#### **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**

- Treating in a dictatorial manner,
- Ridicule,
- Persistent slagging,
- Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.
- Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.
- Inappropriate questions/ comments re. personal life/family
- Inappropriate questions/ comments re. social life or schoolwork.

#### **Interference with property, for example:**

- Stealing/damaging books or equipment
- Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
- Demanding money with menace
- Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property

- Marking/defacing property

**Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**

- Condescending tone,
- Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,
- Writing of anonymous notes,
- Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments,
- Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes,
- Knowingly spreading rumours,
- Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,
- Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),
- Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),
- Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,
- Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

• **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

- Deliberately marginalising an individual
- Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,
- Deliberately preventing from joining in activities - work or recreational
- Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.