



COUNTER BULLYING POLICY

2021/22

Counter-bullying policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on 30/9/2021

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 Pobalscoil Neasáin has adopted the following counter-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 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 nonthreatening 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 (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
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

All members of the school community are subject to this policy. Bullying behaviour such as cyberbullying, which breaks the law, may be referred to the Gardaí.

The policy will be applicable during

- a. School time (including break/lunch times)
- b. Going to and from school
- c. School tours/trips/activities
- d. Extra curricular activities

The school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at any location, activity, function or programme, if in the opinion of the school management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for any member of the school community. If the bullying has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school, the school also reserves the right to apply its counter-bullying policy.

3. In accordance with the Counter-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/transphobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special 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. There is a legal obligation on the part of the school to report any incidents or suspicion of sexting immediately to the Gardaí.

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. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- All staff should be aware and mindful of bullying in the school and should be familiar in detail with the procedures and signs.
- Year Heads are the designated ‘relevant teachers’ responsible for allegations of bullying.
- All incidents of bullying observed/suspected/reported in school environs must be recorded and emailed to the relevant designated person. -i.e. the relevant Year Head
- Year Heads will liaise with support teacher, subject teachers, Sports/P.E. Department, extra-curricular activities, areas of unstructured activities.
- If the chaplain or those working in Guidance and the student support team become aware of alleged bullying because of the nature of their work, they must report it to the relevant person i.e the relevant year head.
- The Board of Management is informed about all serious incidents of Bullying at scheduled board meetings.
- It must be noted that incidents of bullying can also be reported to TUSLA, on the Board’s Child Protection Oversight Report and/or to the State Claims Agency as necessary.

5. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Teachers can influence attitudes to alleged bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives that promote respect for diversity and inclusiveness. This is in line with the caring and inclusive mission statement of the school and the constant striving to address the wellbeing of every member of our school community.

School Wide Approach

- S.P.H.E makes specific provision for defining and exploring bullying and the interrelated areas of belonging, integration, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme provides opportunity to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying.

- In C.S.P.E., interdependence of people at community, national and international levels is emphasised.
- In 2021/2022, a separate ‘Living, Learning and Leading’ class was introduced as a curricular element in First Year, Second Year, Third Year and Transition Year. In this class, students are taught the importance of self-care, positive interactions with others, online safety, etc. See LLL on TEAMS for further information.
- In the promotion of physical, mental health and wellbeing, various other social, health and media education programmes will provide guidance on developing a physical and mental health promoting school.

Wellbeing is embedded in Junior Cycle and Transition Year, and to this end all subject department plans, and schemes of work incorporate reference to wellbeing, developing positive self-image, coping strategies and positive peer interactions.

Prevention Strategies

- Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g. Cool School Lessons, #UP2US, Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, On My Own Two Feet, Fuse DCU initiative.
- School wide delivery of lessons on **Relational aggression** (Cool School Programme: A Friend in Deed), **Cyber Bullying** (#UP2US, Think Before you Click, Let’s Fight it Together, Web wise Primary teachers’ resources), **Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying** (Growing up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust pack) **Diversity and Interculturalism**.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary and post- primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- The school will implement the advice in “Sexual Orientation advice for schools” (RSE Primary, see booklet).
- First Year Induction
- Student council involvement on the Safe School programme
- Promoting a culture of telling, ensuring students know who to tell and how
- A clear awareness of the consequences of bullying

Links to other policies

- List school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying, e.g. Code of Behaviour, Child Protections policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Attendance, Sporting activities.

6.1 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:

A student or parent/guardian may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers will take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's Counter Bullying Policy. The member of staff dealing with bullying is referred to as "the relevant teacher" i.e. The Year Head, Deputy Principal

The school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- 1) The relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- 2) All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in "telling". It will be made clear that when a student reports incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- 3) Ancillary staff such as secretaries, Inclusion Support Assistants, bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners and any other ancillary staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying to the Principal or Deputy Principals.
- 4) Parents/guardians and students are required to co-operate with any investigations and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring the relationships of the parties. Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom.
- 5) All investigations will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of the students. Great care will be given to sensitively working with the alleged bully and the victim in all cases.
- 6) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group by the relevant person. At the group meeting each student will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. Students may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s), which will be documented and filed for future reference.
- 7) In cases where it has been determined that bullying has occurred, contact will be made with the parents/guardians of the parties involved to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken by the school.

8) Effort will be made to try to get the alleged bully to see the situation from the perspective of the person being bullied.

9) It will be made clear to the alleged victims and parents/ guardians of the alleged victim, that where disciplinary sanctions are required, it is a private matter between the student being disciplined, the parents/guardians and the school.

12) If a bullying behaviour is not adequately addressed within 20 days after the relevant teacher has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template (See Appendix 1).

13) If a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred to the school's complaints procedures. (c.f. Complaints Procedure)

14) The parent has the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation, including General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

15) The relevant person will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept. The Year Head will keep written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issue and restore the relationship of the parties involved. The recorded material will be retained by the Year Head and a copy given to the Principal or Deputy Principals. These records will be retained in the school in line with the school's data retention policy (see Data Protection Policy).

16) Any material that relates to bullying or a bullying incident should be submitted by the class teacher or staff member to the relevant Year Head. The Counter-bullying Policy will provide for appropriate linkage with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referrals to relevant outside agencies. The advice of NEPS (National Educational Psychological service) will be sought if deemed necessary.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 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.

- Pastoral care system e.g. Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor
- Tutor/Year head system
- Care team / Student Support Team
- Whole staff support (SNAs etc)
- Mental Health Week
- SPHE programme
- FUSE programme

- LLL class
- Cool School Programme

If students require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies (internal and external) to organise same. This may be for the student affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

Students should understand that there is a duty on any person witnessing bullying behaviour to report this to a teacher/staff member.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Counter-bullying policy

The effectiveness of the school's Counter-bullying Policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. Pobalscoil Neasáin will have periodic examinations of the prevention and intervention strategies. Parents/guardians, students and staff will be consulted, and information gathered about the effectiveness of the counter-bullying measures and behavioural trends. The Record of Bullying form (see Appendix) will be a valuable and accessible source of data in relation to bullying behaviour in the school.

- Once per year data from the reports will be collated and analysed.
- Levels and nature of bullying behaviour will be identified.
- Actions and responses will be assessed.
- Input will be provided to staff at the beginning of the school year.

Counter-bullying will be on the BOM agenda to outline strategies to address such issues and procedures involved in dealing with an incident of bullying behaviour. This will ensure that concerns are dealt with and the welfare of individual students are safeguarded and effectively addressed.

10. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 30/9/2021

11. Communication: This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year (Appendix 4 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Post Primary Schools). 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.

Signed: J. Hogan

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: P. McKenna

(Principal)

Date: 30/9/2021

Reviewed and amended by Board of Management 30/9/2021