

OOLA N.S.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy is based on the DES guidelines “Countering Bullying Behaviour”. It aims to produce a safe and caring environment in which all children can develop to their full potential.

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. Further to this, the school does not tolerate accusations of bullying that are false or malicious and recognises the effect that this can have on a child. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community – pupils, staff and parents – are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides recognition, action and organisation within the school for preventing and responding to bullying.

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 Oola 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 the 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 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 (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)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Sept 2013) bullying is defined as follows:

Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as repeated and sustained acts of aggression, which may be verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, isolation, name calling, writing notes, e-mailing or texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour, it is usually hurtful and deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or anti-social behaviour, which must not be condoned. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying.

Specific types of bullying may include, but are not limited to:

EMOTIONAL: Being deliberately unkind, shunning, excluding or tormenting. Examples: Forcing another student to be “left out” of a game or activity, passing notes, making fun of a victim, or making threatening faces or gestures.

PHYSICAL: Pushing, kicking, hitting, tripping, punching or using any other sort of violence against a victim. Examples: Shoving a victim into walls while changing classes in the hallway, throwing objects at a victim, kicking, striking.

RACIST/INTOLERANT: Taunts, slurs and/or physical threats directed around a victim’s race, religion or ethnicity. Examples: Writing notes with racial slurs, repeated racist name calling.

SEXUAL: Initiating and/or executing unwanted physical contact, making sexually threatening and/or abusive comments. Examples: Grabbing a victim’s body, using derogatory labels.

VERBAL: Name-calling, ridiculing, using words to attack, threaten or insult. Examples: Spreading rumours, making fun of a student’s appearance, mannerisms or intelligence.

CYBER: This is becoming more common in recent years where someone is being bullied through the use of information technology. Examples: Leaving threatening messages on social networking sites such as Facebook, sending nasty texts, intimidating on chat rooms such as Messenger, Skype

*Please note that an instance of bullying may fall into more than one “category” listed above.

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. Please note that Facebook account users must be 13+ years of age and that mobile phones are not permitted in school. Electronic and mobile devices i.e. Nintendo, i-pods are not permitted in school.
- As cyber bullying is generally perpetrated out of school, parents are responsible for policing children's use of internet and social networking
- 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 the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Additional information on safety on the internet is available on web site.
<http://www.webwise.ie/>

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigation and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Class teacher
Principal

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:

Programmes that help prevent bullying by fostering empathy, respect, resilience, self-worth e.g.:

S.P.H.E including sections from:
Stay Safe

Walk Tall
Relations and Sexuality Education (RSE)
My Selfie and the Wider World
Webwise Primary Teachers Handbook
Circle Time
Garda SPHE Programme

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:

Investigation and Follow-up

- (i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigation 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 investigation 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 of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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 secretary and special needs assistants 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 will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (viii) Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved'
- (ix) All interviews will 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 will seek answers to questions of
 - In your own words, what happened?
 - What were you thinking at the time?
 - What were you feeling at the time?
 - Who has been affected and how were they feeling?
 - In what way?
 - What needs to be done to make things right?

This will 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 will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be encouraged to meet as a group if appropriate. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened;
- (xii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (xiii) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will 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;
- (xiv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will 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:
- (xv) 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;
- (xvi) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged where appropriate;
- (xvii) 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 recording template at Appendix 1;
- (xviii) 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;
- (xix) 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;
- (xx) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

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

- (i) While all reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in

- relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;
- (ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
 - (iii) The relevant teacher will use the recording template at Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred.

The recording template at Appendix 1 will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 1 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

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

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be based on our prevention strategies. School will endeavour to offer opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be part of our school's intervention process. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Our programmes of support are similar to our prevention strategies (refer to Section 5).

- Buddy Bench/Step
- Alive O/Grow in Love

Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour should be reported to a teacher.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations and equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual 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 _____.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Council. 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. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Fr. John Morris, Chairperson,
Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Pat Enright,
Principal

Date of next review: _____

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.” (Department of Education and Skills guidelines)

Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self-esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. (This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning). If unchallenged, other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, missing.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the child.

What to do if your child is being bullied

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him.
- Discuss with her/him what to do next – he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage her/him to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

What to tell your child to do if he is being bullied

- Tell the teacher immediately.
- Tell your parents when you get home.
- Help the teacher to investigate it.
- Tell a friend about what is happening.
- Tell the bully to stop.

What to tell your child to do if someone he knows is being bullied

- Tell a teacher (privately, if necessary).
- Tell his/her parents – they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied – you may be able to help her/him.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends – tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.