

Geashill National School

Anti Bullying Policy

Scoil na Croise Naofa Geashill NS Anti Bullying Policy

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 Geashill 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.

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); and

- 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* 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 the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

4. Relevant Teachers

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in our school are as follows:

- All teachers including support teachers
- Principal

5. Prevention Strategies

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:

Awareness Raising

- The school aims to prevent bullying by raising awareness through the SPHE curriculum which is taught at each class level. Programmes such as Walk Tall, RSE and Webwise will instil empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- Through the teaching of all subjects teachers aim to foster an attitude of respect for all, to promote diversity, to address prejudice and stereotypes and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

Building Self-Esteem

- The school will endeavour to enhance the self esteem of all pupils through specific lessons across all class levels. Opportunities for team building exercises will be encouraged at an age appropriate level. Many opportunities to reinforce positive behaviour arise daily which also enhances self-esteem.

Whole School Approach

- Each staff member will be made aware of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. It will be discussed and reviewed at least once every year at staff meetings.
- Professional development in the area of anti- bullying will be encouraged.
- Parents will receive a copy of this policy on their child's enrolment. Parents will be encouraged to inform the school of any concerns that may arise.
- This policy will be published on the school's website.
- Anti Bullying will be on the agenda for at least one Board of Management meeting each term.
- This policy will be discussed and reviewed annually by the Board of Management.

Web Etiquette/Safe Surfing

- The school has an Acceptable Use Policy which deals with web etiquette and safe surfing.
- Parents receive a copy of this policy on their child's enrolment.
- Teachers will regularly discuss and review this policy at staff meetings.
- The school has a web filter operating which controls the online content available.
- Children will be taught appropriate online behaviour.
- Specific lessons will focus on skills needed for surfing the web such as: effective and safe searching, downloading images and determining what online content can be trusted, communicating online or by text message at an age-appropriate level. Issues such as the sharing of personal information online, the treating of others with respect, cyber bullying, responding to digital media and dealing with spam will be covered at an age-appropriate level.

Children with Special Needs

- Teachers will endeavour to create an atmosphere of inclusion for all pupils with disabilities or with SEN.

- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN will focus on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all.
- Geashill School has a very fine tradition in this area as is demonstrated by our Cairdeas classes for Deaf Children.

6. School Procedures for Investigation, Follow-Up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour.

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 consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice.
- When a parent or pupil brings a bullying concern to any teacher in the school, individual teachers must take appropriate measures.
- The primary aim for all teachers when investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- On receipt of a bullying concern the teacher will record details using the agreed template as found in Appendix 3, Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary School.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach.
- Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- Interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- The teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At this meeting each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone involved is aware of each other's statements.
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after an interview by the teacher.
- If appropriate, the teacher may ask those involved to write down their account.
- 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).
- Where a 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.

- It must 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.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within twenty school days the recording template will be submitted to the principal or deputy principal.
- If a teacher makes the judgement that the bullying is of very serious nature, he/she will report it immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

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 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;

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

- Teachers will record allegations of bullying using recording template at Appendix 3 (as detailed above).
- It must be retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal and Deputy Principal as applicable.
- Data gathered from these reports must be regularly (at least once in every school year) collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour.
- A record of this analysis must be retained and be made available to the Board of Management.
- At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:
 - The overall number of bullying cases reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the board and;

- Confirmation that all these cases are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy which was formulated following the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools.

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy will link in with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

7. School Supports

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 is in place.
- Such pupils may need counselling and/or 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 is also part of the schools intervention.
- Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an on-going basis.
- For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's 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.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- The school will provide a wide range of (opportunities) to develop self-esteem, promote positive interaction and strategies for dealing with conflict resolution through the following programmes- Stay Safe, (annually in all classes Term 3) R.S.E., S.P.H.E., Walk Tall, Circle Time, Drama/role play.
- Teachers will monitor any child affected by bullying by the following means: i.e. observation in and out of class, informal chats with pupil and on-going liaising with parents.

- Children affected by bullying will be encouraged to keep a personal diary to express any fears or concerns.

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 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. Ratification

This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management on 18th November 2013 and will be reviewed annually.

11. Publication

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. Implementation 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 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: T. Coonan

Msgr Thomas Coonan
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Micheál Hyland

Mícheál Hyland
(Principal)

Date: 25th October 2023

Date: 25th October 2023

Date of next review: October/November 2024

- consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school - this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is insulting of pupils with a disability or SEN
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- Regularly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Regularly encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use
- Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil-friendly language in the playground and in common areas
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision
- Support the establishment and work of student councils
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school
 - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
 - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms

APPENDIX 1: Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use
- Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school
 - o Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
 - o Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

APPENDIX 2: Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain

Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: 'Do this or I won't be your friend anymore'(implied or stated), a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy), non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours about a person or giving them the 'silent treatment'.

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, email, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face-to face-contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) that hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers are also targeted

Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden

Extortion: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Appendix 3 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

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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 community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____
(Relevant Teacher 1)

Date _____

Signed _____
(Relevant Teacher 2)

Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: Chairperson of Parents' Council

The Board of Management of Geashill NS wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 25/10/2023.
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed J. Coonan Date 25/10/2023
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed Michael Hyland Date 25/10/2023
Principal