



Anti Bullying Policy

Introductory Statement

We in Castlerock NS, felt there was a need to update our Anti Bullying Policy to underpin our updated Code of Behaviour. We took a whole school approach to the review of the policy with input from teachers, support staff, ancillary staff, parents and pupils.

Rationale

Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such it is an issue that must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES, 1993)

- An Anti Bullying Policy is required by law
- To reinforce the schools Code of Behaviour

Aims

By introducing this policy the school hopes:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To provide as far as possible comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To provide support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti bullying behaviour.
- To alleviate / reduce incidents of bullying behaviour in school

Other examples of aims are listed in the Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour, 1993

Guidelines (Content of policy)

This policy is addressed under the following headings:

- Definition of bullying
- Indications of bullying
- Strategies for prevention of bullying
- Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying
- Board of Management
- Reference to other policies

1. Definition of bullying

Dept of Education and Science guidelines define bullying as ... *repeated aggression, verbal, psychological, emotional or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

The types of behaviour, covered by this definition are physical aggression, damage to property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls/text messages/web messages, isolation, name calling, slugging, negative personal comments, sarcasm, homophobic bullying, cyber bullying {Facebook ,etc}. All types of bullying includes children and adults.

Types of Bullying

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.

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 will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with schools 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 it 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.

The definition of bullying will be taught with the children during SPHE lessons

2. Indications of Bullying

All staff should be vigilant for signs of bullying. List the indicators that may suggest that a pupil is being bullied. e.g. anxiety about travelling to and from school, unwillingness to go to school, deterioration in educational performance, ... (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

3. Strategies for Prevention of Bullying

'At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual...' (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

The school fosters a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents.

There is a strong sense of community and cooperation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying.

The school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.

The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall, Stay Safe and Circle Time Programmes are used throughout the school to support the anti bullying policy.

Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.

Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.

Children will be encouraged to "Tell".

The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.

Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.

All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.

Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.

Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

As part of the 'Transfer programme' (from primary to secondary), the Home Youth Liaison Officer addressed 'anti bullying' as one of the themes.

A PPDS advisor has also addressed anti bullying and friendship work in the classrooms, through Circle Time and Active learning methodologies.

The class teachers consistently reinforce the messages and develop the content with suitable resources following on from these inputs.

The 'Alive O' programme is a resource widely used to support lessons around anti bullying and conflict resolution.

As we are a small school, we have regular contact with parents to address any issues or concerns that the staff may have. While we believe, at times, formal contact is important and appropriate, we also believe that the informal contact we have with parents, promotes good relations with the school and home and assists us in keeping abreast of any issues around bullying or breaches of the Code of Behaviour.

The school maintains awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour

Each school must raise the awareness of bullying in its school community so that they are more alert to its harmful effects. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

Below are listed some practical ways in which the school can emphasise that bullying behaviour is unacceptable, e.g.

Facilitate a common understanding among staff, pupils and parents on what bullying behaviour is. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

We use both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable for example, visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games.

The school's supervision practices are used as a strategy for prevention of bullying behaviour e.g.

All sections of the school are supervised at break times

All adults are vigilant during the school hours

4. Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying

Adults are best advised to take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

All reports of bullying, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

We in Castlerock NS endeavour to approach the issues of bullying in a caring and sensitive manner.

Initially, we allow a 'cooling off' period so as pupils have time to reflect on their actions.

The procedures used for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour are as follows: The class teacher asks the following questions to find out the "what, where, when, who and why" of the incident. *What happened? What happened before that?, What did you do?, Where were you when it happened?, Who was with you, Who heard?, Who saw?, Who else was involved?, How did you react?, How did you feel?* etc.

Where a pattern seems to be emerging, the Principal is informed and she will take the appropriate steps as deemed necessary, based on the details of each individual case.

If the problem reoccurs or escalates, the parents will be informed in writing. The Board of Management may be informed. Parents may be invited to meet the BOM. Teachers investigating cases of bullying will keep a factual, written record of their discussions with those involved. A factual record of these incidents are kept. Under fair procedures, the parents/guardians of the pupils involved will have access to these written accounts (with names deleted)

Non-teaching staff such as the secretary and cleaner are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff

In cases where bullying has been proven the school takes the following steps e.g. involvement of parents, sanctions (refer to Code of Behaviour), whole school/class lessons will be taught dealing with respect, self-esteem, the issue of bullying etc., referring pupils who need specific support to NEPS, Youth Liaison Officer, HSE etc

For cases of adult bullying, the procedures as outlined in the INTO / Management Bodies publication "Working Together. Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations" will be followed.

5. Board of Management

'The overall responsibility for ensuring that a code of behaviour is prepared in the school rests with the Board of Management ... The Board has particular responsibility for the ethos of the school, as well as having overall responsibility for school policies'. p.15 *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*, NEWB, 2008

The BOM is consulted in drafting / reviewing the anti-bullying policy

The procedures are in place for the Board of Management to deal with serious incidents of bullying behaviour (Refer to *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*, NEWB, 2008)

6. Reference to other policies

Other school policies that have a bearing on the anti-bullying policy are:

- SPHE plan
- Code of Behaviour
- Health & Safety

Success Criteria

Some practical indicators of the success of the policy will be:

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils and inspectors
- Observation of behaviour{ improvements or otherwise} in class rooms, corridors, yard etc. will be noted

Roles and Responsibility

Those who have particular responsibilities for aspects of the policy are as follows

The Principal, class teachers and auxiliary staff will coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy

The class teacher has particular responsibilities in reporting on and dealing with the early stages of incidents. The class teacher is responsible for teaching whole class lesson dealing with respect, self esteem and the issue of bullying.

The Principal will oversee the implementation of the policy and will liaise with the BOM.

The parents will encourage good behaviour.

Implementation Date

This policy will apply from June 2014

This policy will be reviewed and if necessary, amended in two years.

The ratified policy will be communicated to members of the school community.

Ratification

This policy was ratified on 17/6/24

Signed : 

Reference Section

- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website www.irlgov.ie/educ
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
- Anti-Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
- Achieving Positive Behaviour. A Practical Guide. Patricia Dwyer. Marino
- Working Together for Positive Behaviour, Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 2006
- Working Together. Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations. INTO, 2000
- Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying. HSA, 2002
- Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998
- Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d))
- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5)
- Management Board Members' Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA.
- Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools