



## DONOUGHMORE NATIONAL SCHOOL

### Policy on 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 Donoughmore 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. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the Class Teacher initially, and the Principal Teacher thereafter if necessary. The Principal/Deputy Teacher may participate in any investigations or dealings with alleged incidents of bullying behaviour.
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:
  - a) Parents are requested and actively encouraged to make their children aware of the unacceptability of bullying behaviour, and encourage them to report such behaviour to their teachers in school, or the staff of organisations of which they belong, whenever they witness it.
  - b) We adopt a whole school approach where all have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying and an awareness of its negative impact.
  - c) The school staff promote and foster an atmosphere of mutual friendship, respect and tolerance
  - d) Children's self-esteem is promoted through celebrating individual differences, acknowledging achievements, rewarding good behaviour and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum.
  - e) The school's Code of Behaviour is brought to the attention of all pupils at the start of the school year. The rules and the reasons for them are explained and discussed and will be referred to throughout the year as the need arises. This is done at an age-appropriate level.
  - f) The school implements in full its Mobile Phone Acceptable Use Policy. We educate pupils on appropriate online behaviour, raising awareness of cyber-bullying and its implications. Gardai will visit the school to talk to the children about the implications of the internet and social media.
  - g) Teachers help children develop empathy by discussing feelings and encouraging children to put themselves in the place of others. Problem solving strategies are explored with the children to help resolve conflict.
  - h) Children are made aware that bullying is an unacceptable form of behaviour. This is done explicitly through the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and the RSE programmes (cf SPHE plan). Regular school assemblies will be used to reinforce this. Opportunities also are availed of in Religion, Drama, P.E., and sport.
  - i) Teachers engage children in group activities which will encourage them to work together, co-operate, listen to and respect one another's views e.g. annual cake sale, project work, Junior Achievement, debating.
  - j) We engage the services of our NEPS Psychologists when the need arises to advise us and recommend appropriate intervention programmes.

- k) We promote open communication with parents where they can feel comfortable approaching staff about incidents of bullying.
  - l) We ensure that comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures are in place.
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:
- a) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the class teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type of bullying and how best the situation might be resolved.
  - b) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). In this way, pupils will gain confidence in telling. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
  - c) Non-Teaching Staff – Special Needs Assistants, School Secretary, Caretaker and Cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
  - d) Parents/Guardians 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.
  - e) It is very important that all involved, parents and pupils, understand the above approach from the outset.
  - f) Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
  - g) Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
  - h) 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.
  - i) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
  - j) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
  - k) Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
  - l) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
  - m) 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 (by reference to the school policy). 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.
  - n) 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 will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- o) 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.
- p) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- q) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of 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 it practicable
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- r) An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.
- s) Where a parents is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- t) In the event that a parent/guardian 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.

**Recording:** Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour will be documented using the template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 3). All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

a) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s) will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussion with those involved regarding same.

(b) If it is established by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) will keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

(c) The relevant teacher(s) will use the recording template as Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- (i) In cases where the teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they had determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- (ii) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (i) and (ii) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 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 involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore, various approaches and intervention strategies may be used, including suggesting that parents seek referrals to appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families, if needed.

**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. This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management on **October 2017**.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). 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. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Reviewed and ratified: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Reviewed and ratified: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Reviewed and ratified: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_