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Anti Bullying Policy

Introduction

This policy was originally drawn up by school staff, BOM, parents and pupils of Rathcormac National School. The policy was subsequently updated in 2015 to comply with the requirements of *The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, published in September 2013.

Rationale

We recognise the right of each individual child to an education in a safe and secure environment free of intimidation and bullying behaviour. Our Code of Behaviour outlines expected behaviours and, as such, informs this Anti-Bullying Policy.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour:

- A.** A positive school climate and culture 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.
 - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- B.** Effective leadership
- C.** A school-wide approach
- D.** A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- E.** Implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy and resilience in pupils and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- F.** Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

- G. Supports for staff
- H. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- I. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Relationship to Characteristic spirit of school

Our school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of each individual pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. We take great pride in promoting our Christian values of respect, honesty, kindness and gentleness and these underpin our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Aims

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To create the conditions in which pupils are free to learn and play without fear of intimidation
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure 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 support those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with the appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-bullying behaviour.

Guidelines

1. Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2013*, 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
- Physical aggression
- Verbal abuse
- Extortion
- Damage to property
- Intimidation
- Name calling

- Telephone calling, text messaging and cyber-bullying
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the travelling community and bullying of those with a disability 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 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 under the school's code of behaviour.

2. 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).

It is the responsibility of the BOM in conjunction with the school staff and pupils to develop a system under which proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to deal with incidents of bullying behaviour. All staff members are committed to tackling/preventing bullying. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- The acknowledgement of the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a safe and secure environment.
- The school promotes positive habits of self respect, self discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- Other policies are in place to support this policy, e.g, Code of Behaviour and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy.
- All staff members, pupils and parents are required to treat everyone with respect.
- The school community is organised in a manner that minimises opportunities for bullying including sufficient supervision at all times and Buddy System of playing with children during lunch time.
- All school personnel are watchful and vigilant at all times.
- Complaints are dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly, involving parents in the process where appropriate.
- The school has a firm and fair discipline structure.
- The school climate ensures that kindness, respect and tolerance are advocated and promoted throughout the school and it is always emphasised that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and wrong.
- Promotion of anti-bullying in the school through activities such as Anti Bullying Week in the first term, Bully4U workshops, SPHE lessons, Stay Safe programme, assemblies, displays/posters around the school, Circle Time and Walk Tall programme.

3. Fostering a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents

Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. There is a strong sense of community and co-operation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying behaviour. We endeavour to foster this positive school ethos in the following ways:

- The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti bullying policy.
- A Buddy Squad (usually 5th class pupils) is in place on the school yard to encourage participation by all children in structured play activities.
- A Buddy Bench is situated in the school grounds to foster a caring atmosphere.
- 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.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff is 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 made 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.

4. Supervision practices as a strategy for prevention of bullying behaviour

The school yard is divided into designated play areas in order to minimise the possibility of bullying behaviour occurring. Children may only play in their designated area where they are supervised at all times by a staff member. During inclement weather children remain in their classroom where they are supervised by staff members. (Senior pupils are encouraged to aid staff members by entertaining the junior children) Alternatively, children are brought to the hall for physical exercise under the supervision/instruction of a teacher. Adequate supervision is also provided for all extra-curricular activities to ensure that children remain safe and secure.

5. Indicators of Bullying.

The following are **some** of the signs that **may** indicate bullying behaviour;

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school
- Reluctance to go to school
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illnesses (headaches, stomach aches)
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress (vomiting, withdrawing, nightmares, lack of sleep etc)
- Missing or damaged possessions
- Increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruises, cuts,
- Damage to clothing
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is causing concern

5. Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying

“Teachers 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, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by staff. In that way pupils will gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. The following procedures are used for investigating and dealing with an incident of bullying behaviour:

- All reports of bullying behaviour will be taken seriously and complaints will be investigated fully with care and sensitivity
- The victim will be reassured that they are supported and clearly heard
- The school will find out the “what, where, when, who and why” of the incident
- A factual, written record of the discussions with those involved will be kept.
- Every proven incident of bullying will be responded to decisively and promptly
- Where a group of children is involved in bullying, each member of the group will be interviewed individually
- When challenging a perpetrator, the behaviour will be condemned and not the person
- More serious incidents of bullying behaviour will be referred to the Principal and when deemed necessary, parents of both the perpetrator and the victim will be contacted
- Where incidents of bullying behaviour cannot be resolved satisfactorily within the school, the incident will be referred to the BOM
- Where it’s deemed appropriate, advice will be sought from outside agencies eg. NEPS, Bullying Support Centre (Trinity College), HSE etc. and follow-up support may be required

6. Outcome

If the school authorities feel that there is evidence of bullying, the following strategies will be used:

- If the behaviour is not too serious and the staff have confidence that it may end, the class teacher and Principal and/or Deputy Principal will discuss the matter with both parties. The perpetrator will be warned of the consequences should there be any recurrence of this behaviour. The situation will then be closely monitored by all relevant staff. Parents may be informed.
- If the behaviour is of a severe bullying nature, or escalates, the situation becomes more serious and the following sanctions may be applied:
 - Continued reasoning with the pupil and advice on how to behave
 - Loss of various privileges
 - Parents may be requested to escort their child to and from school
- In very serious cases, it is within the power of the Board of Management to exclude a pupil for a period or ultimately to expel a pupil. (Rule 130 Rules for National Schools)

The school may seek assistance and advice from outside agencies if necessary, including NEPs, TULSA and the HSE (social services).

The aim of the school will always be reconciliation and resolution of conflict.

7. Support for pupils affected by Bullying

Support for victim: Those who have been subjected to bullying will be supported through the pastoral care structures in the school. Support will be provided for anyone who has been or is being bullied by offering them an opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or another teacher or Principal. A victim will be fully reassured that the school community will help them and put monitoring structures in place to safeguard them. Where possible or appropriate, children may have an opportunity to participate in social skills lessons to raise their self esteem and to develop friendship and social skills.

Perpetrator: Those who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be encouraged to recognise the inappropriateness of this behaviour and the seriousness of its effect on others. Help and support will also be sought for the perpetrator. This may involve discussion with the child and self-esteem work.

Others: Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers. Class lessons will be taught, mainly in SPHE, dealing with respect, self-esteem and the issue of bullying. Children are assured that they may seek help from many sources, e.g. parents, school community and outside agencies.

8. Adult Bullying

Bullying of school personnel in any form as described in section 1 above, whether by pupils, their parents/guardians or by colleagues, will not be accepted in Rathcormac National School. Such incidences shall be investigated and acted upon.

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.

9. Harassment

The Board of Management confirms, that in accordance with its obligations under the equality legislation, it will take all 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 incl. transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

10. Success Criteria

Levels of incidents of bullying behaviour will be monitored within the school with a view to the evaluation of this policy.

11. Timeframe for implementation and review.

This revised policy will be implemented from September 2014 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

13. Ratification and communication

This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school blog. Parents have been notified of the revised policy.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Rathcormac N.S.

Signed; _____
Chairperson.

Date; _____