

Gaelscoil Shlí Dála

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Anti-Bullying Policy

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Introduction

Gaelscoil Shlí Dála school community believes that each child has a right to an education in a supportive, caring and safe environment free from fear and intimidation.

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the Code of Behaviour, which is used to address isolated instances of anti-social behaviour. In school, we work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. The individuality of each child needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a disruption free environment.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression, whether verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include physical aggression, damage to property, intimidation, isolation, name-calling, taunting or 'slagging'. Child to child bullying, teacher to child, intra staff bullying, parent to staff and parent to child bullying (including a child other than their own) are examples of the areas where bullying may occur.

Isolated instances of aggressive behaviour, which would be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour, would not be described as bullying. However when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying.

The school acknowledges that there are three parties involved in bullying – those who bully, those who are bullied and those who witness the bullying. Staff and teachers bear this in mind when dealing with bullying incidences and try to support and work with all parties involved.

Aims of the Policy

- To foster a school ethos of mutual and self-respect
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour
- To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

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 certain key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour by promoting:

- (a) **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.
- (b) **Effective leadership**
- (c) **A school-wide approach to the awareness and the tackling of bullying**
- (d) **A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**
- (e) **Implementation of education and prevention strategies** (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- (f) **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils**
- (g) **Supports for staff**
- (h) **Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and**
- (i) **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

Relevant Teachers

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in the school are the class teachers, support teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

Rights and Responsibilities

In the daily life and routines of the school the ways in which people interact with each other significantly affect each person's sense of self-worth, belonging and well-being. The fostering of good quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, parents and ancillary staff is a responsibility shared by everyone.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

Responsibilities of the Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

Responsibilities of School Staff

- To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school.
- To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain safe learning environment for the whole school community.
- To empower students to deal with conflict in constructive ways.
- To take all reports of bullying seriously and to report them to the Principal if warranted.
- To document any serious bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Report Form.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- To show consideration, respect and support towards others.
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour.
- To not bully others.
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.

- To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour.
- To develop a sense of empathy for targeted members of the school community and as a result take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

Responsibilities of Parents

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied.
- To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
- To speak to the class teacher as soon as they are aware that issues are arising which are affecting their child.
- To instruct their children to tell if they are being bullied or if they have seen other pupils being bullied.
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem. They should not defer letting the school know of any issue, in the hope that the problem will go away.
- To ensure that if their children are online that they are using social media in a safe and responsible manner; parental supervision is very important in this area as there are risks associated with internet/website access.
- To never directly approach a student, or the parent of a student, at the school to intervene in behavioural issues.

Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that are used by our school include:

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community; adults should model the type of behaviours they promote to pupils.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention;
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community (eg: talks for parents/pupils on Stay Safe, Internet Safety/cyberbullying). Awareness-raising exercises from websites such as www.antibullyingcampaign.ie
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision also applies to monitoring pupils' use of communication technology within the school.
- Systems such as "The Buddy System" and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- A copy of The Anti-Bullying Policy is given as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school upon entry.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. 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.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
 - *Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.*
 - *Hand note in with homework.*
 - *Worry box for older children.*
 - *Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.*

Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place. All teachers will teach children to recognise bullying behaviour and encourage them to use their voice to say 'no' to such behaviour.

- Encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

Implementation of curricula

- The implementation of the SPHE curriculum, according to our school plan, including the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme and The Walk Tall Programme (integrated); cyberbullying (Webwise teachers' resources) and lessons from www.antibullyingcampaign.ie
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

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 detailed below. The primary aim in investigating 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). Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Pupils are encouraged to report bullying behaviour as soon as possible.
- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to the attention of any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretaker, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and dealing with incidents

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews should 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.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Teachers who are investigating bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- It is school policy to request the assistance of another staff member in such investigations.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
- It may also be helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s) (if appropriate).
- Where the relevant 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.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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

parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.

- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

The following steps are taken in dealing with bullying behaviour:

- In Gaelscoil Shlí Dála we try to enable those involved to engage in a mediated conversation, the purpose of which is to allow for the victim to have a voice and the perpetrator to understand the consequences of their actions. All staff will be made aware of the importance of this practice.
- A verbal warning is given to the perpetrator to stop the offending behaviour. This is done in the presence of the perpetrator's parent(s), the Principal and another teacher. The perpetrator is requested to apologise to the victim in the presence of the Principal and another teacher and to give an assurance that the offending behaviour will stop.
- There may be loss of specific privileges which may include the following: exclusion from break/lunchtime play for a specific number of days; parents may be requested to escort their child to and from school.
- If bullying reoccurs, it may be deemed necessary to have the perpetrator sign a contract of agreement to stop the bullying behaviour. This would also be signed by the parent(s). The contract will be monitored regularly by the Principal with the assistance of the class teacher and another member of staff to see that the situation is resolved.
- If after the above, the bullying behaviour reoccurs a formal meeting of the perpetrator, his/her parents / guardians, the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management will be held and a formal suspension may occur. The Chairperson has the authority to enact an immediate suspension. Alternatively, in certain circumstances he/she may issue a final Chairperson's warning to the perpetrator.
- While the school supports parents and pupils in dealing with issues that arise outside of school, parents should be aware that the school is limited in its power to deal fully with issues that arise while the children are not under our care.

Follow up and recording

- 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is important that all recording of bullying incidents is done in an objective and factual manner. This school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Determining that bullying has occurred

- All staff are encouraged to keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them and then report to the relevant teacher. All such incidents are recorded by a teacher in an incident book stored in the school office. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

When the recording template is completed, it will be retained in the office.

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher conversations with pupils.
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process.
 - Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
 - Circle Time and similar strategies in order to address issues.
 - Anti-bullying programme and awareness-raising throughout the school year.

Support

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

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
 - Pastoral care system
 - Buddy system
 - Care team
 - Group work such as Circle Time
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be either for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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 members of the school community 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____.

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____