

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Introductory Statement

Knock National School is a Catholic school and all children, staff and visitors are encouraged, in line with our Christian ethos, to *"treat others as you would like them to treat you"*. In line with this ethos, it is imperative that we create a positive school culture where the core values of respect, empathy, trust, tolerance and integrity, are implicitly and explicitly modelled for the children who come to work, learn and play in our school each day.

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 Knock 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. Bullying

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:

1. A positive school culture and climate which-
 - a. Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - b. Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - c. Promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
2. Effective leadership;
3. A school-wide approach;
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - a. build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - b. explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
6. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
7. Supports for staff;
8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

3. Definition of Bullying

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:

1. Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
2. Cyber-bullying and
3. 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.

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

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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".
4. **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, e-mail, 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. It is parents' responsibility to ensure they are aware of age limits for social networking sites. The school have made parents aware of information available from the office on internet safety.
5. **Name-calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which 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.
6. **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. 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.
7. **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.

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.

4. Responsibility

The class teacher and/or principal teacher is responsible for investigating and dealing with reported incidents of bullying.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies the school will implement to counteract bullying include the following:

1. All staff will promote and model the school's key values: **Respect, Empathy, Trust, Tolerance and Integrity**. Teachers will help the children to understand and explore these values with the children through Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons.
2. Every effort will be made, through curricular and extra-curricular programmes, to provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
3. The Stay Programme, taught in all classes in our school each year, is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. As part of the Stay Safe Programme, lessons pertaining to Anti-Bullying will be taught in all classes each year. Lessons will focus on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying including its causes and effects. The anti-bullying lessons in the Stay Safe programme will be extended by each teacher to include identity-based bullying.
4. Bullying prevention and awareness measures will focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. Social Media websites such as Facebook are for children aged 13 years upwards; it is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children are accessing age-appropriate websites outside of school. The following resources, pertaining to Internet safety, will be made available on the school website – www.knockns.ie
 1. A copy of this Anti-Bullying Policy document
 2. Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools published by the Department of Education and Skills
 3. Get With It – A Guide to Cyber Bullying published by the Office for Internet Safety – www.internetsafety.ie
 4. Get With It – A Parents' Guide to New Media Technologies published by the Office for Internet Safety – www.internetsafety.ie
 5. EU Kids Online – Final Report
5. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) include improving inclusion, focusing 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 and helping one another as central.

6. Staff will always be encouraged to contribute towards the development of a sense of community within their own classroom and throughout the school to:
 - Promote the value of diversity and inclusiveness
 - Address prejudice and stereotyping
 - Highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour

6. Procedure for Investigation of Bullying Behaviour

The following procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying will be followed by all members of the school community:

1. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher and/or principal teacher. In that way, pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will 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. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the principal teacher.
2. The class-teacher and/or principal teacher will investigate a reported incident of bullying behaviour. The primary aim for the class-teacher/principal teacher in investigating and dealing with the 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.
3. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the class-teacher and/or principal teacher will exercise her/his professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
4. Parents/guardians and pupils will be 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.
5. The class teacher and/or principal teacher investigating bullying behaviour will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians.
6. Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
7. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved may be asked for information in relation to an incident or set of incidents.
8. When investigating incidents of bullying behaviour, the class-teacher and/or principal teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner that sets an example for children in relation to appropriate methods for dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Individuals may be asked to provide written information in relation to bullying incidents in the school.
12. In cases where it has been determined by the class-teacher and/or principal teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken by the school and how they can assist their child to avoid further incidents of bullying behaviour. If the principal teacher

has not been involved in the investigation up to this point, he/she will be informed of the outcome of the investigation by the class-teacher. The principal, in collaboration with the class-teacher, will carry out all of the remaining steps in this procedure.

13. Where the class teacher and/or principal teacher has determined that a pupil has 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 help her/him to see the situation from the perspective of the victim. A student's failure to immediately cease bullying behaviour may be viewed by the principal teacher as a serious risk to the safety of others. The school's code of behaviour specifically states that an immediate suspension is warranted when:
"... the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students, or staff, of the school, or any other person."
14. It will be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) by the principal teacher 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.
15. 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 victim of bullying is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
16. If the teacher/principal teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by her/him in the recording template at **Appendix 2**.
17. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the class teacher and the principal teacher must, as part of their professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - c. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - d. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
18. 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 which is published on the school website.
19. 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.

Simplified Version of the procedure for children

1. ***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.***
2. Bullying behaviour should be reported, immediately if possible, to the class-teacher. Children must ensure that all incidents of bullying behaviour, which cannot be reported to the class teacher immediately, are reported to the class-teacher or principal teacher before the end of the school day. You must give an accurate account of the incident(s) being reported. Incidents that occur in the yard should be reported, in the first instance, to the supervising teacher and then reported again to the class-teacher.
3. The class-teacher will investigate the incident(s) reported by asking what, why, where, when and who questions.
4. If bullying behaviour has occurred, the class-teacher will inform the principal who will make a record of the incident and contact the parents/guardians of those involved.
5. A student who is unwilling or unable to stop bullying behaviour immediately will be suspended by the principal teacher.

6.1 Record Keeping Procedures for Investigations into Bullying Behaviour

1. Written/typed records will be kept for all investigations into reports of bullying behaviour. The class-teacher and/or principal investigating bullying behaviour will use her/his professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept pertaining to the report of bullying, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding the bullying behaviour. Copies of these notes will be stored on pupil files in the classroom and/or student database system
2. If it is established by the class-teacher and/or principal teacher that bullying has occurred, the principal teacher will keep appropriate written/typed records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. A copy of the records taken will be stored in the Bullying file in the principal's office.
3. The recording template included in Appendix 2 will be used by the teacher/principal teacher in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after she/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred. A copy of the completed form in Appendix 2 will be stored in:
 - a. Pupil files of the children engaged in bullying behaviour
 - b. The Victim's pupil-file
 - c. The Bullying file in the Principal's office

Referral of Serious Cases to the Health Service Executive (HSE) Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or the Gardai as appropriate.

7. Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying

The following supports will be provided for pupils affected by bullying:

1. Opportunities will be provided for pupils have been bullied to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience. Examples of such opportunities include:
 - a. Carrying out messages/tasks for teachers
 - b. Assisting in the junior classes during game time (*during lunch period*)
 - c. Participation in after-school activities e.g. Sport, Choir, and ICT Club
2. If possible, additional support in the area of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) will be provided for children who have been involved in bullying behaviour. The school has a number of resources available in the area of SPHE including the 'Elf-help' books which can be used at a whole class/school level to address issues pertaining to bullying and other social behaviours. Outside speakers may be invited into the school to support the work of the teacher e.g. local guard with regard to cyber-bullying.
3. Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss it with their teachers as recommended in *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* published by the DES.

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. Communication of Policy Document

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent/Guardian Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and Most Reverend Bishop Michael Neary (School Patron) if requested.

11. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed at a Board of Management meeting in autumn 2014 or at an earlier time if, a request is made for a review by members of the school community. The checklist in **Appendix 3** will be used to guide the review process. If areas for improvement are identified, an action plan will be put in place to address the issues of concern. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent/Guardian Association. The standardised notification that will be used for this purpose is included in **Appendix 3** of this policy document. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the school Patron and/or the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

12. Ratification of Policy

This policy was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management of Knock National School on 9th April 2014.

