

# **Bracken ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy**

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 Bracken ETNS 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;
  - C/f attached Appendix 2
  
  - Effective leadership;
    - Key role of principal and teachers in creating a positive atmosphere, modelling behaviour, influencing attitudes and setting standards in dealing with bullying behaviour
  
  - A school-wide approach;
    - A high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness and the promotion of home-school-community links
  
  - 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;
  - On-going professional development
  - Anti-Bullying awareness on agenda of each staff meeting
- 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(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Initially class teachers are responsible for investigation and dealing with bullying allegations.

The Deputy Principal is made aware of all incidences of bullying and advice sought. However, at the Deputy Principal's discretion the Principal is made aware of more serious or on-going incidences.

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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Bullying Awareness Month each year
- On-going focus in curricular areas – eg. English, SPHE (RSE, Stay Safe, Walk Tall), ETP, Drama, ICT (Staying safe online)
- Development of social interaction skills through specific programmes (e.g. Time to Talk, Socially Speaking, Social Stories etc.) targeting children with SEN
- Incredible Years behaviour programme employed at Junior level
- Restorative Practice model modelled and taught at every class level
- Stop, Think and Do method of problem solving taught at every class level
- Show Racism the Red Card resources used
- Yellow Flag Programme
- Bullying Ambassadors trained
- Developing self-esteem through classroom interactions, small focus groups with targeted children, After-School clubs, curricular and extra-curricular programmes
- Ethical Core Curriculum – Specific lessons focused on identity-based bullying
- Focus on cyber-bullying and internet safety (e.g. Use of Webwise resources)
- Sustained focus on bullying awareness through the use of visual resources such as posters in general areas, the use of a “Drop Box” in each classroom, Principal's blog with a focus on bullying awareness, parent information talks
- Assembly – Information session and class presentations

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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

*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. (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013)*

### **Rationale**

The primary aim for the relevant teachers in investigation and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships for the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);

All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, no matter how trivial, are noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

### **Approach for dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

- Children should discuss any incident of bullying behaviour with their parents/guardians, their class teacher, or another trusted adult in the school community. This is behaving responsibly and is not telling tales.
- Parents should talk to the class teacher if they have concerns about incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.
- Non-teaching staff should report any incident of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or disclosed to them, to the class teacher of the child or children concerned.
- Parents 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.
- It is very important that all involved understand the above approach from the outset.

### **Procedures for dealing with bullying behaviour**

All incidents of bullying behaviour which are drawn to the attention of a teacher will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Incidents are investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
2. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all children involved. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information.
3. The teacher will interview all the children involved in the incident. However in a more serious incident of bullying (e.g.: gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the issue will be referred immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

4. Interviews will be conducted using a problem-solving approach, in a calm, unemotional manner and seek answers to the questions: **What? Where? When? Who? and Why?**
5. The alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator/s of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem through the Restorative Practice approach.
6. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should 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 should 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.
7. If a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how s/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. S/he will be encouraged to see the situation from the victim's point of view and where the incident is deemed to be minor a verbal warning will be given to stop the bullying behaviour. S/he will be expected to give a full apology.
8. A meeting involving the Principal or Deputy Principal and the parents/guardians of the victim/s or perpetrator will be convened. This provides an opportunity to discuss the incident and support the children involved.
9. Where the incident is deemed to be serious (e.g. serious misbehaviour or physical assault) the principal will be informed immediately and will take appropriate action. This will involve a formal meeting between the Principal, class teacher and parents/guardians.
10. 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
11. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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; and
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
12. Where a parent 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;

13. In the event that a parent 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**

1. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher, the class teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
2. If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
3. Where appropriate, the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator/s will be asked to write down any relevant details of the incident and these will be attached to the records.
4. The relevant teacher will use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour and a copy will be sent to the Principal.
5. Under Freedom of Information Act, the parents/guardians of the pupils involved may have access to these written accounts (names deleted)
6. The school will include the following steps in responding to bullying e.g. involvement of parents, sanctions (refer to Code of Behaviour), programmes with victims, bullies and their peers, whole school/class lessons to be taught dealing with respect, self-esteem, the issue of bullying etc., referring pupils who need specific support to NEPS or other services.

### **Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

In some cases where bullying behaviour is part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and may involve serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. Such cases are dealt with using appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour. Referral will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate.

### **Referral of serious case of bullying to the HSE**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection

Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”

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 Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

7. The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

Art therapy and play therapy are available in the school to help raise self-esteem and build resilience through the exploration of their thoughts and feelings.

The Imagination Gym programme is provided as an extra support.

A pastoral care person is assigned at each class level to provide extra support for both bullies and their victims.

A culture of openness is fostered throughout the school which facilitates discussion and problem-solving.

Observers of bullying are encouraged to discuss this with teachers.

Following discussion and agreement with parents, in some cases children are referred to external agencies such as The Family Centre, Foróige, Jigsaw etc.

## **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 adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ [date].
  
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

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

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

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

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

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Reference Section**

- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)
- 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.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Advice for Parents**

#### **Effects of Bullying**

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self-esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. (This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning). If unchallenged other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

#### **Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms**

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after long school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bed-wetting.
- Spontaneous out of character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the child.

#### **What to do if your child is being bullied**

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him what to do next – he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage him/her to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.

- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.
- What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied.
- Tell a teacher (privately if necessary).
- Tell his/her parents – they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied – you may be able to help him/her.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends – tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.

**What to tell your child to do if he/she is being bullied.**

- Tell the teacher immediately.
- Help the teacher to investigate it.
- Tell the bully to stop.
- Tell your parents when you get home.
- Tell a friend about what is happening.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate**

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.

- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
  - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.