



SAPLINGS SPECIAL SCHOOL, KILL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the *code of behaviour guidelines* issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Saplings Special 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; and a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact; and the implementation of education and prevention strategies can all help to reduce the likelihood of bullying in our school context by:

- building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils, and



- explicitly addressing the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

This is done through 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 described 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 travelling 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 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. The relevant staff for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Principal --- Alan Brennan

Acting Deputy Principal --- Aine Duffy

Class Teacher---Ina Hall

Class Teacher--- Chloe Doran

Class Teacher---Zoe Mason

Class Teacher--- Sinead Coffey

Class Teacher--- Sharon Byrne

Behaviour Analyst—Eimear Hynes

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- the utilisation of informal opportunities to build empathy, respect and resilience
- the utilisation of both formal and informal opportunities to develop in students a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem
- supervision and education in the area of technology use that would focus on prevention and awareness of cyber-bullying
- focus on inclusion, social skills, transition from Saplings to another setting and cultivation of a school culture in which respect for all and a helpful attitude towards each other are central.
- prevention and awareness-raising measures that are age- and gender-appropriate



- inclusion of anti-bullying measures on staff-meeting agenda
 - awareness of bullying issues in implementing curricular programmes
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:
- The main aim of the teacher(s) investigating reported incidents of bullying will be to resolve any issues and, in so far as is possible, to restore the relationships of the parties involved
 - Reports of bullying behaviour must be made to the class teacher(s) of all students involved
 - The teacher(s) will use professional judgement to determine if bullying has occurred and how best to resolve the situation
 - All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated in order to encourage confidence in the matter of making reports
 - Non-teaching staff, including SNAs, bus escorts, the secretary, OTs, SLTs and cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant class teacher(s)
 - Parents and students are obliged to co-operate with any investigation and to assist the relevant school staff in resolving any issues and in restoring, in so far as is possible, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible
 - The Class Teacher(s) should take a calm, fact-finding and problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
 - In the interests of privacy, reported incidents will be investigated away from the normal classroom situation
 - All reported incidents will be investigated with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all concerned



- The relevant class teacher(s) will rely heavily on “what, where, when, who and why” questions in a fact-finding approach that relies on calmness and non-aggression
- If more than one person is involved, each person will be interviewed individually initially, and then as a group, where each person can be aware of the statements of others
- Each member of the group will be supported through pressures he / she may face from other group members after interview by the teacher
- In cases where it has been determined by the class 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 to explain the actions being taken. School staff will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports being put in place for the students
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour, attempts will be made to make 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 student being bullied
- It will be made clear to each set of students and parents involved that, in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his / her parents and the school authorities
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date, on the agreement of the student who has been bullied
- In cases where the class 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 the teacher in a “recording template.” The following factors will be taken into account in determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed:



- (1) Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - (2) Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved in so far as is possible
 - (3) Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored in so far as is possible
 - (4) Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the School Principal or Deputy Principal
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school authorities have dealt with an alleged bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred to the school's complaints procedures
 - In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school authorities will advise the parent of his / her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

Recording:

- While all reports of bullying will be investigated, 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
- \if it is established by the class teacher that bullying has occurred, that teacher will keep appropriate written records that will assist his / her efforts to resolve the issues and to restore, in so far as is possible, the relationships of the parties involved
- The class teacher must use the "recording template" to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - (a) In cases where he / she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been addressed adequately and appropriately within 20 school days after he / she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred. And



(b) In all cases where, in his / her professional judgement, the bullying behaviour warrants being reported to the Principal or the deputy Principal as applicable.

- In each of the circumstances above, the “recording template” will be completed in full and retained by the class teacher and a copy will be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. The class teacher may consult with the Principal or deputy Principal at an earlier stage if he / she considers that to be the correct course of action.
- In instances where behaviour may escalate beyond that which may be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment this anti-bullying policy will be linked with the school’s overall code of behaviour and referral may be made to relevant external agencies and authorities. In cases where there are serious concerns in relation to managing a student’s behaviour, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.
- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services.

7. The school’s programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:

- Opportunities will be provided to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed by a student who has been bullied
- Opportunities will be provided on an ongoing basis to develop increased feelings of self-worth in students who have engaged in bullying behaviour. This may necessitate the provision of counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others
- Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their class teachers.

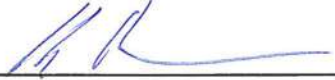
8. The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.



9. 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 students or staff, or the harassment of students 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 the 11th November 2019.
11. This policy has been made available to personnel, is readily accessible to parents and students and has been provided to the Parents' Association.
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, will be readily accessible to parents and students on request and will be 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 of Education and Skills.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: 24 OCT 24

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 24/10/24

Date of next Review: __October 2026__