



# **Abbeyleix South National School**

*Scoil Náisiúnta Mainistir Laoise Theas*

## **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 Abbeyleix South 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. 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; (Appendix 1)
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- 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;
- 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. Refer to Appendix 2a Responding to Cyberbullying ([www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie))

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 Appendix 2

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

- The Class teacher
- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal

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

**School-wide approach**

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- 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 will be 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, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) of incoming pupils are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour.

- The school's anti-bullying policy will also be available to view by Parents on request, and on the school website.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures may include:
  - ✓ Friendship Week (Children will be taught strategies to help resolve conflict e.g. SALT- Stop, Ask, Listen. Talk)
  - ✓ Questionnaires/surveys in senior classes
  - ✓ Agreed whole school time-tabling of lessons on anti-bullying
  - ✓ Assemblies
- The implementation of NEPS programmes e.g. Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. 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 up with homework.
  - ✓ Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
  - ✓ Anti-bully or Thought box? Worry Box
  - ✓ Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - ✓ Administer a confidential questionnaire to pupils in senior classes.
  - ✓ Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

#### **Implementation of curricula**

- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programme. These may include:
  - ✓ Stay Safe Programme
  - ✓ Walk Tall Programme
  - ✓ Be Safe-Be Web Wise
  - ✓ Cyber-Bullying Programme
  - ✓ Friends for Life

- ✓ Time to Talk
- ✓ Zones of Regulation
- ✓ Social Skills programme “Stop, Think, Do”
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons delivered by the Community Guard, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- 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.
- The school will implement the advice in “Sexual Orientation advice for schools” (RSE Primary, PDST Information Booklet).

**Links to other policies**

- ✓ Code of Behaviour
- ✓ Child Safeguarding Statement
- ✓ Special Educational Needs
- ✓ ICT and Acceptable Use Policy
- ✓ Health and Safety

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:

**Investigation:**

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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)
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will 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

- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- 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 (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews will 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 will seek answers to questions of **what, where, when, who and why**. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- 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;
- 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;
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant 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 explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will 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;

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been 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 try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) 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

**Follow up:**

- 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 pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- In cases where the relevant 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 relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3 .
- 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; and
  - ✓ 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 has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, 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 must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Recording bullying behaviour:**

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant 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;
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must 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.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
  - A. In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
  - B. where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

7. 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.

- ✓ SALT Conflict Resolution Programme
- ✓ Circle Time activities
- ✓ SPHE Programmes e.g. Walk Tall, Zippy's Friends,
- ✓ NEPS - Friends for Life,
- ✓ Art Therapy
- ✓ The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

#### Referral of serious cases to the H.S.E. (TUSLA)

- The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 provide that, in situations where child protection concerns arise from alleged bullying behaviour among pupils the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) (i.e. the Principal) or the Deputy DLP (i.e. the Deputy Principal) will seek advice from Tusla as to whether to report the concern (Section 9.7 Child Protection Procedures, 2017).
- In addition, each teacher as a "mandated person" under the Children First Act 2015, is required to comply with his/her reporting requirements. The school must keep children safe from harm and report child protection concerns above a certain threshold to TUSLA and or the Gardaí.

#### 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

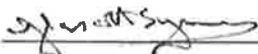
sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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 be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) 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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

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

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

## **Appendix 1**

### **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.

## Examples of bullying behaviours

<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Damage to property</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Slagging</li> <li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li> <li>• Offensive graffiti</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li> <li>• The “look”</li> <li>• Invasion of personal space</li> <li>• A combination of any of the types listed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation</li> <li>• <b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li> <li>• <b>Impersonation:</b> Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name</li> <li>• <b>Flaming:</b> Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li> <li>• <b>Trickery:</b> Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</li> <li>• <b>Outing:</b> Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li> <li>• <b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li> <li>• <b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety</li> <li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone call</li> <li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li> <li>• Abusive text messages</li> <li>• Abusive email</li> <li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles</li> <li>• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Identity Based Behaviours</b></p> <p><b>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</b> (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>	
<p><b>Homophobic and Transgender</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation</li> <li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation</li> <li>• Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian, faggot ...used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>• Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>
<p><b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relational</b></p>	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malicious gossip</li> <li>• Isolation &amp; exclusion</li> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Excluding from the group</li> <li>• Taking someone’s friends away</li> <li>• “Bitching”</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Breaking confidence</li> <li>• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>• The “look”</li> <li>• Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>• Harassment</li> </ul>

**Special Educational Needs,  
Disability**

- Name calling
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.
- Mimicking a person's disability
- Setting others up for ridicule

## Responding to Cyberbullying

Schools already deal with bullying through anti-bullying policies and procedures, but cyberbullying, as outlined, presents new challenges.

As a teacher or school staff member, there are things we can do in the battle against online bullying.

- **Support:** Provide the person being bullied with support and reassurance. Tell them that they did the right thing by telling. Encourage the child to get help from Parents, The Principal or Class Teachers. Ensure they know that there is support there for them.
- **Evidence:** Help the child keep relevant evidence for investigations. This can be done by taking screenshots or printing web pages. Do not allow the deletion of phone messages
- **Inform:** Give the child advice for making sure it does not happen again. This can include changing passwords, contact details, blocking profiles on social networking sites or reporting abuse online
- **No Retaliation:** Ensure that the young person does not retaliate or reply to the messages
- **Privacy:** Encourage the child to keep personal information private on the internet
- **Investigation:** The cyberbullying claim needs to be investigated fully. If the perpetrator is known, ask them to remove offending remarks or posts. All records should be kept as part of the investigation.
- **Report:** Abuse on social networking sites or through text messaging needs to be reported to the websites and mobile phone service providers
- **Guidelines:** Abbeyleix South N.S will has a number of policy documents which can be referred to. These include:
  - ✓ The Acceptable Use Policy,
  - ✓ Anti-bullying policy and
  - ✓ The Code of Behaviour Policy.

**Appendix 3****Template for recording bullying behaviour**

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

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3. Source of bullying concern/report  
(tick relevant box(es))\*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) \*

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	



7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_

\* Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.