

Boherbue Comprehensive School – 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 Boherbue Comprehensive 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 students 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; to encourage students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promote respectful relationships across the school community;
- 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 students; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- 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.

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 *AntiBullying 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*): Students, parents/guardians, non-teaching staff members and other members of the school community may report a concern to any member of the teaching staff, including the Principal and Deputy Principal. In this context the 'relevant teacher' is any member of the teaching staff.

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*):

5.1 The strategies of the school are based on the school's mission statement 'Boherbue Comprehensive School, conscious of its position in the community, endeavours to give the best education and service to its students and community, based on Christian values that will help all who come in contact with the school to reach their full potential'. This spirit runs through the school day and the relationships in the school.

5.2 It is a continuous message in the school that bullying is not acceptable, ever. In this context there is an onus on the school community to forward any information regarding bullying, cyber-bullying or harassment to the 'relevant teacher'.

5.3 All persons in the school environment must show respect, seek respect and foster respect.

5.4 The school takes steps to promote friendship in the school and to celebrate difference, for example through the wide range of curricular and extracurricular activities available to students.

5.5 The physical school environment (walls etc.) are used to help students to take positive steps if they encounter bullying behaviour or if their friends/fellow students encounter bullying behaviour.

5.6 In the classroom environment certain subjects deal specifically with the issue of bullying, e.g. Wellbeing (CSPE, SPHE, PE., Guidance) and R.E. Other subjects deal indirectly with the issue, e.g. English, Irish, History, Geography, as opportunities arise to deal with the theme of how society treats its fellow citizens.

5.7 The school also endeavours to bring in groups and experts from outside, as well as programmes, to help students in their understanding of the topic e.g. Friends for Life Programme.

5.8 The school provides parents with information and guidance through a number of annual events e.g. Internet Safety, and 'Internet Safety Week'. There is information provided in the school diary to assist parents and students.

5.9 The students in Boherbue Comprehensive School can opt for Transition Year or Leaving Cert Applied. The work experience aspect of these programmes provide the students with the opportunity to meet people who would be different from themselves. It allows them the opportunity to see life from the perspective of people with different abilities, backgrounds, and cultures. This encourages them to understand and defend differences.

5.10 In terms of investigating the issue of bullying the emphasis will be on a resolution that is fair and satisfactory, including a focus on rebuilding and repairing the relationship between the individuals rather than attributing or determining blame. It will however be the prerogative of the school authorities to use the discipline system if the need arises.

5.11 The school will aim to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of the nature of bullying and the correct way to deal with it. The system itself will depend predominantly on students and parents reporting an incident of alleged bullying. The aim will be to make this system as safe and as confidential as possible.

5.12 The Parents Advisory Committee (PAC) have an important role to play also. The school will organise information, all families will have access to a copy of the draft and a copy of the final policy document. It will be important to emphasise that there is a precise definition regarding what bullying entails, as well as highlighting the fact that not every disagreement or argument is bullying.

5.13 Should the need arise the school will enlist the support and assistance of NEPS, HSE and An Garda Síochána.

5.14 The school will provide additional assistance to any students with differing abilities or disabilities, or with learning difficulties.

5.15 The school staff will have at least one session a year to focus on the topic and to help teachers to deal with an incident of bullying, and to implement the policy on a daily basis.

5.16 This policy and its implementation will be monitored by both formal and informal surveying of the student populace every year.

5.17 The school promotes systems such as Sixth Year-First Year Peer Mentoring to support and promote integration within the school.

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*) :

6.1 If a teacher is concerned about bullying behaviour as a result of a report having been received or by direct observation, he or she can deal with it as outlined in the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Sect 6.8

6.2 If a teacher is dealing with an issue of bullying in any form he or she may get support and advice from the school management including year heads, as well as from the Pastoral Care team.

6.3 If it is the opinion of the relevant teacher that this is an incident of bullying 'beyond the norm' the Principal or Deputy Principal should be informed as a matter of priority.

6.4 The school authorities may, if they so decide, to investigate bullying or alleged bullying (and impose sanctions) even if the incident occurred outside of the school if it is established that it is creating difficulties within the school for a student in terms of application to work, or health (physical or mental). This may not always occur. The primary responsibility with regards to an incident of bullying that occurs outside the school rests with the parents, whether this is in the form of cyber-bullying or physical bullying.

6.5 As is clear from section 6.3.5 of the Procedures the school may seek advice and assistance from groups including NEPS, HSE and An Garda Síochána in dealing effectively with bullying.

6.6 As is clear from sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the Procedures, if there is the possibility of Child Abuse involved in the bullying it will be dealt with under the Child Protection Guidelines.

6.7 The investigation of allegations of bullying will follow the procedures and steps as outlined in the Section 6.8.9 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures (as follows).

(i) 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);

(ii) 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;

(iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;

(iv) 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 a relevant teacher;

(v) Parents and students 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;

(vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of students and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

(vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents;

(viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

- (x) 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 a conflict in a nonaggressive manner;
- (xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may 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;
- (xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved may 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 the student;
- (xv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, disciplinary sanction will be applied. 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 student being bullied;
- (xvi) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- (xvii) 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 student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- (xviii) 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 (See Section 6.8.10 (iii))
- (xix) 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: practicable; and from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- (xx) 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;
- (xxi) 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.

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

7.1 The school puts support systems in place to assist all those involved in the bullying incident. Supports for the victim will be (a) Advice from the Year Head, Chaplain, School Counsellor (b) opportunities to be involved in activities with the aim of promoting self-confidence, social skills, and develop friendship skills.

7.2 A programme of support will be put in place for the person(s) implementing the unwanted behaviour. There will be advice on how to create self-worth, and means of learning how to fulfil his or her obligations in protecting the rights of others to a safe environment.

7.3 The school will also support those students who witness an incident of bullying to deal with it and to bring it to the attention of the relevant adult.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students:

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 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.

The school reserves to right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related if in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at the school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 8th February 2023

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel and Students, published on the school website, and is otherwise readily accessible.

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, provided to the Parents' Association and Student Body.

Signed:  (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:  (Principal)

Date: 8th February 2023

Date of next review: March 2024