



Drumfad National School

Drumfad Lower, Kerrykeel, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

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REF: Anti-bullying Policy

School Roll Number 16137Q

Under the Patronage of the Presbyterian Church, Derry and Donegal Presbytery.

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Drumfad 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.

Rationale

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:

- Promoting 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;
- Encourages effective leadership;
- Endorsing a school-wide approach;
- Supporting a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Sustaining the 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.
- Ensuring effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Developing supports for staff;
- Advocating consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- Considering the on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

What is 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:

- 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.

Every child has the right to enjoy his/her learning and leisure free from bullying, both in Drumfad NS.

*Drumfad NS **will NOT tolerate any form of bullying, even if the unkind actions were not intended to hurt.***

Types of Bullying

Intimidation

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

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.

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 of 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.

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 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); a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.

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 or interference with a pupil’s locker or bicycle. 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.

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

Cyber bullying (see Cyber Bullying Policy)

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 networks sites, 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 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

IMPACT AND INDICATORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Impacts of bullying behaviour

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in serious personal injury, even death. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

Indicators of Bullying Behaviour

They include:

- a) Anxiety about travelling to and from school**
- b) Unwillingness to go to school: mitching**
- c) Deterioration in educational performance**
- d) Pattern of physical illness (headaches etc)**
- e) Unexplained change of mood or behaviour**
- f) Visible signs of anxiety or distress (Stammering, nightmares, bed-wetting etc)**
- g) Spontaneous out-of-character comments about pupils and teachers**
- h) Possessions missing or damaged**
- i) Increased requests for money or stealing money**
- j) Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing**
- k) Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her**

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Characteristics associated with bullying

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour

- A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and is social inequalities. “Prejudice-based” or “identity-based” bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.**
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.**
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person’s feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.**
- However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.**
- It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.**

The pupil who is bullied

- Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk, of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil’s continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.**
- Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying, The difficulties include:**
 - i. Fear of reprisals**
 - ii. Concerns about being perceived as a “tell-tale” for reporting bullying**

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- iii. Concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying
- iv. Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation
- v. Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
- vi. Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

More vulnerable pupils

- While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.
- There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability.
- Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

Cyber-bullying: Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school. (see Cyber Bullying Policy)

Areas of unstructured activity: Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/schoolyard. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground/schoolyard games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground/schoolyard provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically in some cases the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration. Toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, the gym and assembly hall may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.

Bullying in the classroom: Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

Coming to and from school: The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

Investigating Bullying

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- the principal
- the mainstream teacher

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- (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 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) Teachers endeavour to take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (vii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (viii) All interviews should 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;
- (ix) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher shall seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This shall be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (x) If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed individually at first.
- (xi) 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 shall be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them 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 shall 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 shall 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;**
- (xv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it shall be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts shall be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;**
- (xvi) It will 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;**
- (xvii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved shall 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;**
- (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 (*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, Dept. of Education, September 2013)**
- (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:**
 - 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 Mainstream Classroom Teacher;**
- (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 shall advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.**

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management ensures that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour takes account of the following:

- (i) 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;**
- (ii) 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.**
- (iii) The relevant teacher uses the recording template at Appendix 3 (*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, Dept. of Education, September 2013) 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.****

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 (*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, Dept. of Education, September 2013) is completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal. 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 at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Preventative Strategies

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:

- **R.S.E. Programme**
- **Stay Safe Programme – updated to include cyber-bullying**
- **S.A.L.T. Programme**
- **Anti Bullying Week, including a cyber bullying activity, takes place each November**
- **Information seminars for Parents**
- **Literature for parents, pupils and staff**
- **General activities to develop empathy, respect and resilience through giving children opportunities to develop a positive sense of self worth.**

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Role of Parents

What can parents do?

Prevention is better than cure

1. Empower schools to act.
2. Empower pupils to report injury
3. Discuss bullying behaviour with your children
4. Challenge every incident of bullying behaviour that is witnessed

Parents empower their children by:

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Promoting confidence
- Avoiding inconsistent discipline
- Avoiding power-assertive methods of discipline
- Giving children responsibility and by
- Exercising democracy.

Remember: Lead by example!

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management of Drumfad NS 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.

Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management of Drumfad NS confirms that the school, will in accordance with its obligations under 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.

Resources

The following resources shall be used where relevant, to help implement the school's Anti-Bullying Policy:

- R.S.E. and Stay-Safe and S.A.L.T. programmes for Whole Class teaching and small group activities, as necessary
- Literature for staff, parents and pupils
- Professional help and advice eg. NEPS, NWHE,
- NWHE Anti-Bullying Week activities each November, as appropriate
- Poetry and stories relevant to the pupils' needs
- Mobile Phone Policy/ Code of Behaviour
- <http://cybermentors.org.uk> – a website where young people can go if they are being bullied or cyber-bullied.

Review

This policy has been made available to school personnel and provided to the Parents of Drumfad NS. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year as per Appendix4 (*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, Dept. of Education, September 2013). Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

**Signed: _____ for The Board of Management.
Mr. Eric Borland (Chairperson)**

Dated: _____