

Anti-bullying policy of Knockminna N.S.

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 Knockminna N.S. 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;
 - 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.**

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 teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher
- In the case of bullying incidents which arise on the yard, the relevant teacher will be the teacher(s) on yard duty plus the class teacher
- The Principal may ultimately become involved

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:

- Through the S.P.H.E. curriculum and using many programmes such as the ‘Stay Safe’ and ‘Webwise’ programmes and taking into account the age, gender and any special needs of the pupils involved, here at Knockminna N.S., we will endeavour to do the following:
 - Teach the children about Bullying in all its forms looking at its cause and effect
 - Declare that Knockminna N.S. is a Bully-Free Zone and ask for everyone’s help to make this a reality
 - Encourage a culture of reporting concerns, including concerns about cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying
 - Have a very clear ‘Internet Acceptable Use Policy’ in the school which is accessible and clear to everyone

- As part of general school rules, children are requested to leave mobile phones and any other internet enabled devices at home. A possible exception to this rule may be school tour day, when more senior pupils may be asked to bring mobile phones for safety reasons in case of separation from the main group.
- Promote inclusiveness and the value of diversity and address prejudice and stereotyping at every given opportunity throughout the school curriculum
- Through the use of 'Webwise' and other internet safety programmes, raise awareness of appropriate on-line behaviour
- Praise children and encourage them to praise each other's efforts to help them develop a positive sense of self worth
- Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils through use of the above mentioned programmes and also their Religion programme

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 primary aim for the relevant teacher(s) in investigating and dealing with bullying is to **resolve any issues** and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportion blame);
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) **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, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners etc. 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 should 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 privacy to all involved;
- 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;
- 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 non-aggressive manner;
- If a group is involved, each member should be **interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should 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;
- **Each member of a group should be supported** through the possible pressures that may face them 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 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;
- **Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, 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 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;**

- **Disciplinary sanctions will be in line with our school's Code of Behaviour and Discipline;**
- **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;
- 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
- 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 practicable, the relationships of the parties involved;
- All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant **data protection legislation;**
- Once **Appendix 3** has been completed in full, it is **retained by the relevant teacher and a copy is provided to the Principal.** The relevant teacher is not precluded from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to the case;
- 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 rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.**

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

- Children who have been the victims of bullying may need **counselling** and the school can help in trying to source this for them
- At school level, those who have been bullied will need every **opportunity to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem**
- **Those who engage in bullying behaviour may also need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others and some may also need assistance in building self-esteem**
- The **National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)** may be contacted in cases where there is a serious concern in relation to managing a pupil's behaviour
- Where an incident is serious or where behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will contact 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 may be referred to the **HSE Children and Family Social Services and/or the Gardaí** as appropriate. The Designated Liaison Person may seek advice from the HSe first if unsure whether to refer the Matter or not

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 the 19/05/2014

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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

Date of next review:

This policy will be reviewed at the first B.O.M. of the new school year