

BMNS 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 Bennettsbridge Mixed 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; 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)
- 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:

- Physical aggression, intimidation, name calling, damage to property, extortion, deliberate isolation/ exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying

- 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 will 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.

4. The Relevant Teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying at BMNS are all Class Teachers, the Principal and the Deputy Principal

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:

Teachers will regularly raise awareness with the pupils that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of their fellow pupils through the Social Personal and Health Education Curriculum, the Religion Programme and aspects of the Walk Tall, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes. By so doing the Teachers will strive to build self-esteem and to provide opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth. Praise and encouragement will be employed throughout the school to create positive expectations about behaviour. The unique Teacher/Pupil relationship within the primary school classroom is, by its nature, pastoral and affords the Teacher regular opportunities to develop relationships of trust and confidence to prevent cases of bullying behaviour. Supervision and monitoring measures, which naturally incorporate vigilance with regard to bullying behaviour, will take the form of: Morning Assembly supervision by the Principal; playtime supervision by all Teachers, on a timetabled, rota basis; Wet Day Supervision within the classrooms on a timetabled, rota basis with an increased Teacher presence. When necessary, strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying (including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) will be referenced in the above programmes in an age-appropriate manner and any related sanctions will be informed by the school's Code of Behaviour. Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and use behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding a solution to problems. The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school Religion programme, the Social Personal and Health Education programme, the Stay Safe Programme, the Arts and/or Circle time. Teachers will not engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour by: using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils; making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background; humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil

who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways; using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour, 1993).

The School Staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, will respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidence of bullying and will investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers.

Parents will encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school; encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression; encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others; watch out for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others; discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with their children; support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

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:

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent or a friend. All reported incidents of bullying behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the Principal. Reports of bullying behaviour on the way to and from school will be investigated by the Principal. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the Relevant Teacher. He/she will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions to be taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. If it is established by the Relevant Teacher that bullying has occurred, he/she 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.

The Relevant Teacher must record the bullying behaviour in the Standardised Recording Template (and a copy must be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable) 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
- b) In certain circumstances where the bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable

In each of these circumstances the Recording Template will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. The timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the Recording Template 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.

Once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the Board and confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school and 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 via the standardised notification. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

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

Support will be provided for anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or other teacher, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it. Continuing support will take the form of Teachers' observation and monitoring; regular checking-in with the victim to offer assurances and opportunities to report further. A victim will be assured that the school community will help them and that monitoring procedures are in place to safeguard them. The school will inform parents/guardians of what has happened and of the measures being taken to help them and to encourage them to report further incidences if they occur. Help and support will be sought for a bully. This will include speaking with them to discover why they became involved, informing their parents/guardians and continuing to work with them in order to modify their behaviour. The school code of behaviour applies to bullying. The bully will be helped to see things from the victim's point of view. Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break or subject to special monitoring procedures and if bullying continues they may be suspended in accordance with procedure. Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school code of discipline. Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school. Follow-up meetings, by phone or face to face with parents, may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships. If the matter is unresolved at school level then the matter may be referred to the Board of Management and then to the Local Inspectorate. Resources from outside agencies for advice or help include: www.education.ie; www.childprotection.ie; www.youthhealth.ie; www.npc.ie.

At BMNS the following poster will be displayed in all public areas and classrooms as a reference point and reminder:

Golden Rule: Today, I promise that I will not say and I will not do anything to make anyone feel uncomfortable

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. 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 18/03/2014

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