



## **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 St. Tola's N.S 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) 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;

**(b) Effective leadership**

**(c) A school-wide approach**

**(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**

**(e) 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;

**(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils**

**(g) Supports for staff**

**(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and**

**(i) 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 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 teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

The Relevant Teachers in St. Tola's N.S. are

St. Tola's N.S		
Principal	Mary Dunlea Fitzgerald	
Deputy Principal	Clare Fitzsimons	
<b>All class teachers</b>		
SET teachers		

**Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.  
In the first instance any reports of bullying behaviour will be investigated by the relevant class teacher. The class teacher may consult with the principal/deputy principal at any stage.**

5. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows

#### Education and prevention strategies

##### School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- All classes teach the school and class rules explicitly at an age appropriate level. The appropriate behaviours required are reinforced in a positive manner by all staff. All pupils are reminded of the standards of behaviour expected as outlined in the schools Code of Behaviour. The pupils will be reminded of these standards by their class teacher and at Cruinniú by the principal on a regular basis.
- All staff will promote 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.
- An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources will take place at the start of each school year.
- 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. SNAs and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. As SNAs are in the yard at every break they are well placed to observe bullying behaviour or a pupil may report a concern to them. The SNA will report this to the class teacher in the first instance. *Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.*
- Involvement of the pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Buddy system, 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils acting as minders in the infant classes at break time and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be included in student journals and 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) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school on enrolment. Both policies are available to view on the school website at [www.tolasns.com](http://www.tolasns.com)
- The implementation of regular (e.g. per year/per term/per month/per week) whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board at regular intervals throughout the school year in the halla and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week; annual or term or monthly s pupil surveys; regular anti-bullying messages discussed at Cruinniú by principal.
- The principal regularly includes details on anti-bullying events in the school newsletter.
- All staff will encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.

- 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, at breaks.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - Get a friend to tell on your behalf
  - Parents/guardians to inform the class teacher if they have a concern
  - Administer a confidential questionnaire regularly to all pupils in 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> classes to ascertain if there is a bullying issue.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. Parents may ring the school and speak to a class teacher at an appropriate time or make an appointment to call in and meet with the class teacher.
- The school has developed an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored. Pupils may only bring a mobile phone to school if it is deemed necessary by parents and all mobiles must be powered off throughout the school day.

#### **Implementation of curricula**

- St. Tola's N.S. will use Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) to deliver programmes in this area. These include, Stay Safe, Walk Tall, Bí Follain,
- Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes will be provided as required.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> classes will use materials from the Anti-Bullying Campaign. Lessons on **Cyber Bullying** will be sourced from Web Wise Primary teachers' resources as required
- St. Tola's staff have received training in the Incredible years programme. This programme aims to build emotional competence and self esteem in pupils.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying and will be delivered to senior class pupils when available.
- 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.

#### **Links to other policies**

- This policy links very closely with the following policies - Code of Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Attendance Strategy

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):

### Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

**The primary aim 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);**

**The school's procedures must be consistent with this approach.**

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

#### Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. This will usually be the class teacher initially.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as, special needs assistants (SNAs), school secretary, caretaker, cleaner must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

#### Investigating and dealing with incidents:

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of 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 relation to what happened.
- 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 the 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the 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 parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school; Sanctions may include some or all of the sanctions detailed in the schools Code of Behaviour at Level 2

### **Follow up and recording**

- 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;
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- 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.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

#### **Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Each teacher will record these in their teacher incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant class teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

#### **Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred**

- 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.
- At the initial stage the class teacher keeps their records in the class incident book in the classroom.
- The class teacher may inform all staff if there is an ongoing issue so that all staff are aware and vigilant while on yard duty.

### Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) in cases where in the professional judgement of the teacher he/she the bullying behaviour has not ceased within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) In cases where a pupil or group of pupils cause deliberate and intentional harm to a pupil(s)
- c) In cases where a pupil or group of pupils threaten physical harm to a pupil(s)

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. The principal will store these records in the office. The class teacher will store their records in the class incident book kept locked in the filing cabinet.

### 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.
  - Teacher monitors pupils progress in this area
  - Buddy / Peer mentoring system
  - Group work such as circle time
- If pupils require counselling of further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

For pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour

- Pupils may be asked to sign a promise sheet that they will not engage in this behaviour in the future.
- Some pupils may need further support in terms of friendship and social skills and may if appropriate and with parental consent be offered some teaching support in this regard
- In relation to bullying in schools Children First Guidance for the Protection of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where *"the incident is serious and the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response such as a management plan"*

### 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.

