



Monkstown Educate Together  
National School

# Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy fully complies with the requirements of the  
*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (DES, 2013).

## **1. Introductory Statement and Rationale**

### **1.1 Introductory Statement**

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 Monkstown Educate Together 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.

The Monkstown Educate National School community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. Whilst reflecting changes in legislation, this policy also prioritises our school's needs and recognises the school's engagement with a variety of anti bullying programmes (eg. 'Sticks & Stones'; 'Friends for Life'). Through the involvement of all members of the school community in the process of agreement on what is meant by bullying, and the resultant development of school-based strategies for preventing or dealing with bullying, it is hoped to increase awareness of the problem.

### **1.2 Scope**

While it is acknowledged that all members of the school community may engage in or be victims of bullying behaviour this policy applies, in particular to students of Monkstown Educate Together National School. It relates to all activities during normal school hours and those beyond school hours which are deemed to have a direct impact on school life.

### **1.3 Rationale**

In the knowledge that no school is immune from bullying it was identified as a priority at this time, by staff, parents and students that strategies for the prevention and management of bullying behaviour be devised. At this school we strive to create a safe environment for learning and for the growth and development of each student. As a caring school community, we hold that all cruel and abusive behaviour, which is persistent and pervasive, is unacceptable and repugnant to the ethos of our school.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of

any kind. Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

An Anti-Bullying sub-committee comprised of staff members and a nominee from the P.T.A. and Board of Management, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying. The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*), resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a “Reform, not Blame” approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils’ participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

## **2. Vision & Aims**

### **2.1 Vision**

*Learn Together to Live Together:*

*Monkstown Educate Together National School strives to create a happy, safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where the uniqueness of each child is celebrated. We aim to provide a space where children are educated and where all members of the school community can grow, develop and achieve their full potential. We aspire to excellence in an atmosphere of respect, openness and joy.*

This policy has been developed in line with our mission statement above which has at its core, care of the student. The school believes that respect for the individual is essential to the smooth running of a school, where effective teaching and learning can take place. The school’s ethos is shaped by the philosophy of the ‘Learn Together’ curriculum.

### **2.2 Aims**

The Staff and Board of Management of Monkstown Educate Together recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. We are therefore

fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- (i) 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
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- (ii) Effective leadership
- (iii) A school-wide approach
- (iv) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- (v) 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.
- (vi) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- (vii) Supports for staff
- (viii) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- (ix) Consultation with our school's Special Educational Needs Policy and Code of Behaviour where appropriate
- (x) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

### **3. Definition of 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 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. (This includes group messaging forums such as viber.) Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium (eg. forwarding a text message), which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence. Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive. 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 staff for investigating and dealing with bullying:**

The member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". In our school the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher. An anti-bullying co-ordinator may be appointed each year. If there is an acceptance that the behaviour constituted bullying, or the behaviour is repeated, the incident will be recorded on the 'template for recording bullying behaviour'. (Appendix 2) The principal and parents will formally become involved if the bullying behaviour is repeated.

As with all instances of misbehaviour in school, if there is an accusation of bullying in the yard, the teacher on yard will investigate and deal with the incident in the first instance. The teacher on

yard will discuss the incident with the child(ren)'s class teacher. The principal is then informed of the incident and the parents may be contacted at this stage. At stage two the principal will also contact the parents of all parties involved and address the issue with them and the class teacher.

## **5. Education & Prevention 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 Monkstown Educate Together N.S. are as follows:

### **General Strategies (Curricular)**

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE curriculum (communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships)
- Our Ethical Education curriculum
- Cross curricular (English: literature to stimulate discussion, Geography/History: exploitation and dictatorships to illustrate the negative aspects of power, PE: Cooperation and channelling energies in a positive manner, Drama)
- Our Stay Safe programme (personal protection skills)
- Our RSE programme (human sexuality and relationships have particular relevance for identity-based bullying)
- Friendship week
- The Buddies system in the school between Junior and Senior Infant pupils and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils.
- Parental awareness (PTA arrange anti-bullying talks for the parent community)
- Staff Awareness (Continuous Professional Development, CPD)
- Restorative practice (The 'No-Blame Approach' ) and Circle Time with classes
- Specific awareness raising exercises that are age appropriate each year. (eg. Slogan / Poster competitions, Questionnaires, Student council-led initiatives)

### **Cyber Bullying Strategies:**

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management are made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying

- Pupils and parents are urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school
  - Staff CPD is organised as required to support learning about current technologies
  - Pupils learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), assemblies, friendship week activities and other curriculum projects
  - Pupils from 2nd-6th class sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract annually
  - Parents are provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying
  - Parents sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract prior to enrolment and are asked to discuss its meaning with their children
  - Pupils, parents and staff continue to be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and school procedures (The anti-bullying committee will co-ordinate this.)
  - All reports of cyber bullying are investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly
  - Anti-bullying workshops / programmes (cyber bullying) for 4th to 6<sup>th</sup> classes are held annually (eg. Microsoft 'Safe Internet Use' workshops / Community Garda workshops / 'Bullying in a Cyber World' programme)
  - The Gardaí will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content
  - This policy will be reviewed annually
  - Child attending METNS may not register with \*social media sites or \*online forums that have an age restriction for under thirteen years such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
- \*Please refer to our ICT policy for further detail on the above.

It is important that we recognise that no one intervention works in all situations and that we keep up to date with international and national research in this area, revising and updating this policy as appropriate. \*See Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of Anti-Bullying Resources and Programmes being used in Monkstown Educate Together N.S.

## **6. Procedures for Investigation, Follow Up and Recording of Bullying Incidents**

***6.1 The procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying in METNS will be used as per the DES guidelines.***

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 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher' may ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as unacceptable behaviour that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued. Parents may be contacted at this stage.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report (see Appendix 2), to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer just be considered an undesirable behaviour. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) of all parties will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. The principal will also be involved formally at this stage. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a

very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely and confidentially in the school.
- Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed in line with our school's code of behaviour:

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the 'Relevant Teacher' and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

## **6.2 Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy links with the overall code of behaviour. Referral will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

## **6.4 Referral of serious cases to the HSE**

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

## 7. Programme of Support

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

### **Bullied pupils:**

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Advise as to adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)
- Implementing a "buddy system" in the school,
- Implementing a "Cáirde" initiative in the playground early in the school year,  
(Senior students will support children in finding friends and playing playground games)

**Bullying pupils:**

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet” (Appropriate time frames to be decided in consultation with staff, parents & children on a case by case basis)
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this
- Advise as to adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child, using a restorative, ‘no-blame’ approach (This approach will be communicated to parents at information meetings at the beginning of the school year.)
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet” and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform

**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. Adoption of Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ .

## **11. Accessibility**

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. Review**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. A major review will be carried out no later than five years after the date of implementation and will involve consultation with the parents, students, staff, management and Board of Management of the school. 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.