Gaelscoil Riabhach- Anti Bullying policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated by the

 Teachers

 Ancillary staff

 Pupils

 Parents

 Board of Management

Rationale

*Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such it is an issue that must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES, 1993)

It was deemed necessary to devise an anti-bullying policy at this time because it is a priority area identified by the school community.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

 This anti bullying policy aims to help prevent bullying in our school and empower pupils and staff to deal with bullying to support the schools mission to provide a motivating, kind, happy and safe environment for our students, as a space in which they can discover and develop their needs.

Aims

With this policy Gaelscoil Riabhach endeavours:

o To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

o To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.

o To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

o To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

o To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

o To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying behaviour.

1. Definition of bullying

*(From Bullyproofing - Advice for parents, p. 2)*

Bullying happens in a relationship between one child and another child or group where some form of abuse of power is used to hurt or reject someone. It can be:

o Verbal: e.g. being called names or nasty comments

o Social: e.g. being left out of things, no one talking to you or malicious gossip.

o Mental: e.g. being threatened or forced to do things

o Material: e.g. possessions being stolen or property damaged

o Physical: e.g. being assaulted

* Identity based bullying: eg bullying related to sexual orientation or ethnic background.

o Technological: e.g. abusive texts/emails, cyberbullying

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993) 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.

The school community made aware of this definition through the circulation of the policy and the it’s inclusion in the school handbook and newsletter. Children are made aware of this definition during circle time. Adult behaviour is also included in the above.

2. Indications of Bullying

(*From Bullyproofing our school p. 5)*

Below is a list of possible warning signs, which may indicate children are being bullied.

Sudden big changes in behaviour are important signs of distress.

If you feel there is something wrong, there probably is.

How they feel:

o Become withdrawn and may drop their interests

o Become easily startled, irritable, aggressive and have temper outbursts

o Lose their confidence

o Cry themselves to sleep or have nightmares

How they look:

o Come home with books, clothes or belongings damaged

o Come home hungry

o Have mystery illnesses

o Change their eating or sleeping pattern

o Start bedwetting

o Have possessions go missing

o Have unexplained cuts or bruises

What they do

o Refuse to tell you what’s wrong

o Start bullying brothers or sisters

o Unwilling to go to school or avoiding particular days or lessons

o Frightened of walking to or from school or beg you to take them

o Change their route to school

o Arrive late or back from school

o Avoid friends and other children

o Begin doing poorly in their work

o Mislay books, equipment or clothing

o Ask for extra money or begin stealing

o Continually lose their pocket money

**What can parents do if you suspect a child is being bullied?**

**Ask:** It is often difficult for children to tell, so it is important to ask children about bullying

**Listen:** Listen to what your child tells you- respond with “I’m really glad you told me that…”

**Talk:** Talk with the child and let him or her know that it is right to tell you if there is a problem. Help the child to understand that bullying is wrong and that the victim is never to blame when bullying takes place.

**Acknowledge:** If the child feels that he or she is being bullied acknowledge this. Discuss the problem and how it maybe resolved. Don’t agree to keep it a secret but encourage a proactive response.

**Get Help:**

* Identify the areas where the bullying happens. If the bullying is school related, talk to the teachers in the class/area. If the bullying is related to a club or activity the child attends, talk to the leaders
* Explain to the child what is happening. Listen to how she/he feels
* Discuss how you might work together to stop the bullying
* Enlist the help of friends to act as a support of the child
* Parents can help to prevent bullying by listening to and talking to children and by praising a child for all their achievements and building up self-esteem

3. Strategies for Prevention of Bullying

*‘At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual…’* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

There is a strong sense of community and cooperation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying.

**General Strategies:**

*Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Materials will include videos on all areas of bullying as outlined in the definition above.*

*Building self-esteem among individuals, and within groups by celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum*

*Fostering good communication in school by modelling good listening skills, encouraging active listening and participation*

*Helping children to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in place of others in role-play situations*

*By developing a relationship with students based on mutual regard, respect and trust so that students have confidence in school staff.*

**Anti-Bullying Strategies**

* Introducing the Stay Safe programme at appropriate levels to discuss, identify and agree class/school strategies for dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour including bullying
* *The children will be encouraged to use the 3 steps from Stay Safe in the event of being bullied by others:*

1. ***Say NO assertively and loud***
2. ***GET AWAY***
3. ***TELL the teacher***

* *Circle time to give the children opportunities to discuss bullying and feelings*
* *During Circle time the pupils are also encouraged to recognise that there are no “Innocent Bystanders” and are encouraged to tell of incidents of bullying*
* *Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings during circle time and by trying to put themselves in the place of others*
* *Staff members to investigate reports/suspicions of bullying and to address the issue with the students*
* *Teachers respond sensitively to students who disclose incidents of bullying*
* *To address victims needs by discussing strategies for keeping safe, telling an adult of concerns and role-playing situations where the students can practise strategies for confronting/standing up to a bully e.g. telling someone to stop, go away, to leave them alone, saying they’ll tell an adult etc.*
* *Putting the issue on the agenda for assemblies and highlighting how everyone can help when they witness bullying behaviour*
* *Clear and consistent application of sanctions when bullying occurs as laid out for inappropriate behaviour in the schools Behaviour policy*
* *Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered “at risk” from bullying*
* *All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated*
* *The school’s Anti-Bullying/Dignity at school policy is discussed regularly at meetings of Coiste na nDaltaí, at assembly and during Circle time*
* *The school’s Anti-Bullying/Dignity at school policy is also referred to in the Home-School contract which is signed by each child and their parent(s)/guardian(s) annually*
* *Members of Gaelscoil Riabhach’s BOM are familiar with the Anti-Bullying/Dignity at school policy and actively promote it among staff, parents and pupils*
* *Parents contribute to and support the schools policy on Anti-Bullying/Dignity at school, by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and in school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or bullying others and by communicating concerns to the school*

*Most children, with a little help, overcome this problem very quickly*

How the school maintains awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour

*Each school must raise the awareness of bullying in its school community so that they are more alert to its harmful effects*. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

Some practical ways in which the school emphasises that bullying behaviour is unacceptable, are:

o *A common understanding among staff, pupils and parents on what bullying behaviour is facilitated through the school newsletter, AGM, School handbook, Home-School contract, assemblies, and in class discussions during Circle Time.*

o *Assemblies are used to remind pupils of the school’s anti bullying policy*

o *Both the formal and informal curriculum are used to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable... visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games.*

o *Special events such as a Friendship Day (Lá Cairdis)*

O *Devising classroom rules collaboratively and displaying them in a prominent location in the classroom*

4. Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying

*Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying.* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

 All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

 Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system; this is responsible behaviour, displaying leadership skills rather than “telling tales”

* Parents/Guardians should contact the class teacher regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or another parent

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are brought to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with as per steps outlined in Cód na Scoile. All incidents will be recorded on a school report template and signed by principal. After 20 days this report and steps taken must be signed off on by class teacher and principal. Reports of a serious nature will be brought to the attention of the Board and all parents involved will be informed.

Procedures:

1. All reports noted and investigated by teachers.

2. Children are given positive feedback for ‘telling’.

3. If parents are made aware they should contact teacher.

4. All the pupils involved will be sensitively interviewed if this is appropriate.

5. The alleged victim/ perpetrators may be invited to record what happened – script or picture–feelings.

6. In some cases the issue may be addressed in the circle time format – with or without the victim present.

7. In serious cases of alleged ongoing behaviour the Príomhoide will be involved at an early stage.

8. In general, the steps of Cód na Scoile will be followed.

9. Every opportunity will be given to discuss the incidents and ensuring that alleged victims and perpetrators have a voice.

10. In the case of gross misbehaviour the Príomhoide will be informed immediately and may proceed to serious sanctions as set down in Cód.

11. Parents may request a review by writing to the Principal.

* For cases of adult bullying the procedures as outlined in the INTO / Management Bodies publication “Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations” should be followed.*

5. Board of Management

*‘The Board of Management has a role to play in the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour in a school. It should be supportive of the Principal Teacher in the application of a fair code of behaviour and discipline within the school’* (Circular 20/90)

 The BOM was consulted in drafting th anti-bullying policy

* The procedures that are in place for the Board of Management to deal with serious incidents of bullying behaviour are outlined in Cód na Scoile

6. Reference to other policies

 The other school policies that have a bearing on the anti-bullying policy are:

 SPHE plan

* Child Protection policy

 Code of Behaviour

 Record keeping

 Home / School links

 Health & Safety

 Special Educational Needs

Success Criteria

Some practical indicators of the success of the policy will be:

 Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils

 Observation of behaviour in class rooms, corridors, yard

Regularity of “ Circle Time” in classrooms

 Use of Stay Safe steps from students, and leadership skills (i.e. No innocent bystanders)

Roles and Responsibility

 All school staff have responsibility for the implementation of this policy

 Class teachers have a particular responsibility for observing “at risk children”, and ensuring Circle time and Stay Safe are part of the class curriculum

 The principal has responsibility for ensuring the steps outlined in Cód na Scoile are adhered to

 Parents and pupils also have a role in promoting and adhering to this policy

* HSE: Advisory role
* NEPS: Advisory role in the area of behaviour management

Implementation Date

Earrach 2014

Timetable for Review

Samhain 2014

A summary report will be given to the board of management annually.

The Coiste Buí must be informed at the end of each school year that this has occurred and will review policy each year and forward relevant recommendations to the board.

Ratification & Communication

March 2014

Reference Section

 *Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools* (1993), available on DES website [www.irlgov.ie/educ](http://www.irlgov.ie/educ)

 *Developing a Code of behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*, NEWB, 2008

 *Stay Safe* and *Walk Tall* Programmes

 *Responding to Bullying - First Steps for Teachers*, The Cool School Programme, NE Health Board

 *Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools*, The Cool School Programme, NE Health Board

 *Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying*, Wexford Education Network, Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994

 Anti-Bullying Unit, Trinity College, Dr. Mona O Moore.

 *Achieving Positive Behaviour: A Practical Guide*, Patricia Dwyer, Marino Institute of Education

 *Working Together for Positive Behaviour*, Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 2006

 *Working Together. Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff* *Relations*, INTO, 2000

 *Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying*, HSA, 2002

 Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998

 Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d))

 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23 (1 -5), 24 (1-5)

 *Management Board Members’ Handbook*, Revised 2007, CPSMA.

 *Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools*, Maeve Martin, Spring 1997, Ch. 4 p.56-61 *Recommendations for Schools*

Sample Videos (March 2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k623Y0u6RZ0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waAqJ6727Hk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvhIdB_8WXE>