

Anti-Bullying Policy



St Benignus NS, Balcaddan

1.0 Introduction

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 Benignus NS, Balcaddan 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.

St Benignus NS aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. We endeavour to equip each child with the skills and positive self-esteem to empower them to contribute to their community and become lifelong learners. We believe that an effective anti-bullying policy is essential for achieving that goal.

2.0 Key principles

2.1 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

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.

3.0 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.

3.1 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 (Appendix 2, Anti-Cyber-Bullying policy) 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 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, part of which is outlined in Appendix 3 of this policy.

4.0 Responsibility and roles

The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. Any teacher can act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it. The responsibilities of the Board of Management have been outlined in 2.1 above.

4.1 Responsibilities of school staff

- To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school.
- To implement prevention, intervention and support strategies which build and maintain a safe learning environment for the whole school community.
- To empower pupils to deal with conflict in constructive ways.
- To follow procedures as laid out in this policy.

4.2 Responsibilities of Pupils

- To follow the school's Code of Good Behaviour, including but not limited to the School and Playground rules.
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour.
- To not bully others.
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
- To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour.
- To feel empathy for targeted members of the school community and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

4.3 Responsibilities of Parents

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To watch out for signs that their child may have been bullied.
- To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
- To instruct their children to tell if they are being bullied or if they have seen other pupils being bullied.
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem.

...Prevention...

5.0 Education and Prevention Strategies

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

5.1 Collaborative policy formation and review

St Benignus NS, Balcadden will develop and review its whole school Anti-Bullying policy in collaboration with the whole school community. The Board of Management and the Parents' Association will collaborate on its review on an annual basis.

5.2 Stay Safe

The bullying topic of the Stay Safe programme will be taught to all classes in line with the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) school policy.

5.3 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying will be taught in all senior classes 3rd-6th using the Prim-Ed series.

5.4 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

The Safety and Protection strand unit under the Myself strand of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) will be taught with regard to preventing bullying type behaviour in our pupils and encouraging positive behaviour. Thirty minutes will be set aside every week for the teaching of SPHE in line with the suggested weekly time framework outlined in the National Curriculum. Anti-bullying lessons will be taught in every term. Homework will be sent home with each lesson. In junior classes this might be substituted with a page describing the work covered in class or an activity sheet undertaken in school.

5.5 Religious education

Our school follows the Alive-O religious education programme which teaches Christian attitudes to behaviour.

5.6 Student Council

Our Student Council members will wear bright yellow Student Council shields. They will be referred to as anti-bullying shields. The pupils of the school will be made aware that Student Council members can be approached if they are being subjected to bullying type behaviour.

5.7 Induction for new parents on anti-bullying

A copy of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy as well as the Code of Good Behaviour will be given to the parents of the incoming Junior Infants at the Induction Night. Parents will be asked to sign an undertaking which supports the policies. This will be a condition of enrolment.

5.8 Availability of the policy

The Anti-Bullying policy and the Code of Good Behaviour will be available on our website www.balcadden.com on the policy page. Multiple hard copies of the policies will be available from the wall holders in the Principal's office.

5.9 Customised Homework Journals

Customised school homework journals will be distributed to all classes Senior Infants-6th class at the beginning of the school year. This homework journal will include copies of the school and playground rules which pupils and guardians/parents are required to sign. The homework journal will also include an information page designated to anti-bullying. This page will clearly indicate to pupils and parents steps they can take if bullying behaviour is affecting them.

5.10 Bullying Awareness Week/Friendship Week

An anti-bullying/friendship week takes place twice a year. Once at the beginning of the school year and again in the second term. Activities will be organised during these weeks. Appropriate home-school links will also be organised.

5.11 School Climate

Bullying behaviour is always unacceptable in our school. St Benignus NS, Balcadden is a 'telling' school. All members of the school community are encouraged and supported to report bullying-type behaviour. Whether you are a victim of bullying behaviour or a bystander who witnesses bullying behaviour, you are encouraged to report incidents to the class teacher. All incidents of reported bullying behaviour will be investigated.

5.12 Outside speakers

Where the opportunity arises and resources permit, guest speakers with an expertise in the area of bullying prevention will be invited to the school to address pupils/staff/parents.

5.13 Pupil Alert Notice

Certain pupils can for various reasons be more vulnerable to bullying type behaviour than others. A Pupil Alert Notice will be sent to teachers if a pupil is suspected of being subject to bullying behaviour, has engaged in bullying behaviour or if there is friction between certain individuals on the playground. The Pupil Alert Notice will heighten teachers' awareness of a problem that needs careful monitoring.

5.14 Playground notebooks

Incidents that occur on the playground will be recorded in the Playground Notebooks. This is to ensure consistency from day to day given that the teacher on the playground rota changes.

5.15 Hot spots and hot times

The staff have identified hot spots and hot times. These are places and times on the school grounds where there is a higher risk of bullying type behaviour. Where possible they will be removed entirely but where this is not possible they will be supervised more thoroughly.

5.16 Knowing who to tell and how to tell

We will ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell. This includes but is not limited to:

- Direct approach to teacher or other member of staff and at an appropriate time, for example after class.
- Hand up note with homework.
- Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
- Send an email to the school.
- Anti-bully or Niggle box.
- Get a parent/Guardian or friend to tell on your behalf.
- Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

...Intervention...

6.0 Investigation, follow-up and recording and intervention strategies

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:

6.1 Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- The primary aim for the class teacher 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 apportion blame);
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher 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 will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will 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 our secretary, caretaker and special needs assistants (SNAs) are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher/principal.

- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- Incidents of a serious nature will be investigated, where practicable, outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- A class survey of the class/classes affected by an alleged incident or incidents may be carried out to gather information. This survey may be general or more specific in nature.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will 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 will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. Follow up may also be required on an individual basis;
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- It may 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 class teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. Parents will be given the 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 class teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It will be 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;
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;

6.2 Ongoing cases of bullying behaviour and recording

In cases where the class teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template (Appendix 1).

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 from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal;

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, parents are referred to our Complaints Procedures policy.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, parents are advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

6.3 Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher, the class teacher will use her/his professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;

If it is established by the class teacher that bullying has occurred, the class teacher will keep appropriate records in the class Anti-Bullying copybook which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The class teacher will use the recording template (Appendix 1) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) in cases where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) in certain exceptional circumstances bullying behaviour will be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template (Appendix 1) will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in the class Anti-Bullying folder in question

and a copy provided to the Principal. Anti-Bullying folders will be stored in the Principal's Office. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the class teacher from consulting the Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Where the behaviour of a pupil escalates beyond that which can be described as bullying, this behaviour will be dealt with under the guidance of our Code of Good Behaviour. Appropriate linkages will be made with outside agencies (e.g. NEPS, HSE, Gardaí etc) where appropriate. In certain circumstances, cases of bullying behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with our Child Protection policy.

6.4 All complaints against teachers concerning bullying behaviour will be handled under the school's Complaints Procedure policy.

...Support...

7.0 Support for pupils affected by bullying

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

7.1 Support for pupils affected by bullying will primarily be catered for under section 5.0 of this policy, education and prevention strategies.

7.2 Class teachers will make arrangements with learning support/resource teachers to allow time for the class teacher to follow up with pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour in school. The time allocation for this will be based on the needs of the pupil(s) as indicated by their behaviour as observed by the class teacher or other members of staff or reported by other pupils. Parents may also request the class teacher to follow up with their child. Where concerns beyond the scope of a teacher's expertise arise, advice will be sought from the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school, in relation to appropriate next steps.

7.3 Support will be provided in partnership with parents/guardians.

8.0 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.

9.0 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.

10.0 Policy adoption

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ (date)

11.0 Availability of this policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website www.balscadden.com and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12.0 Implementation and review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year (Appendix 4). Written notification (Appendix 5) 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.

Reviewed 21/5/2012

Last reviewed November 2013

24/3/2014

22/9/2014

19/10/2015

21/11/2016

2/10/2017

23/11/2020

18/10/2021 28/11/2022

Signed: _____
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy

1.0 Introduction

This policy is an appendix our Anti-Bullying Policy. Incidences of Cyber-Bullying will be dealt with in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy and our Code of Good Behaviour. Cyber-Bullying can be very damaging to individuals, and disruptive to school life. Though new technology brings incredible opportunities for educators as well as young people, it is crucial that everyone knows how to use this technology responsibly and that policies are in place to support and encourage responsible use.

2.0 Definition of Cyber-Bullying

2.1 Cyber-Bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, email, instant messaging, apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technologies to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day and night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

2.2 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.

2.3 However, in the context of our Anti-Bullying 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.

3.0 Scope of policy

3.1 While this policy addresses issues related to cyber-bullying of pupils (i.e. situations in which one or more students are the victim(s) of bullying), this policy also applies to teaching and other staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

3.2 This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

- During school time (including break times)
- Going to and from school
- School tours/trips
- Extra-curricular activities

3.3 Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The

nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber-bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

3.4 St Benignus NS, Balcadden reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school.

4.0 Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

St Benignus NS, Balcadden is committed, to the extent permissible by available resources, to helping members of the school community to enhance their learning experiences through the use of modern technology. The school acknowledges that information and communication technologies can play an important role in supporting learning, but also that they can be misused and can present risks. The school aims to equip members of the school community with the skills and knowledge needed to use these technologies in a safe and responsible manner and to assisting those that encounter difficulties. St Benignus NS aims to create a caring environment where those in the school community can work and learn without fear of being bullied. St Benignus NS aims to educate and inform its pupils as to how to use communications equipment responsibly and about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying.

5.0 Aims and objectives

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Pupils, staff and parents know about cyber-bullying and its effects;
- Members of the school community have knowledge, policies and procedures to prevent, intervene in, and support pupils in respect of incidences of cyber-bullying in school or within the school community.
- The school monitors the effectiveness of its procedures and amends them where necessary.

6.0 Key measures

- Prevention of Cyber-Bullying will occur as outlined in the Anti-Bullying policy using specific interventions in senior primary classes during the teaching of SPHE.
- Our school has put in place a Mobile Phone policy, which is reviewed as necessary, to protect pupils from cyber-bullying.
- Our school had put in place an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to protect pupils in their use of IT in the school.
- The roles and responsibilities as outlined in our Anti-Bullying policy will apply to incidents of cyber-bullying.
- Intervention and support with regard to incidents of Cyber-Bullying will follow the procedures as outlined in our Anti-Bullying Policy.

7.0 Summary

Our Anti-Cyber-Bullying policy is written as an appendix to our Anti-Bullying policy. It recognises the specific nature of cyber-bullying and its harmful effects. All Anti-Bullying initiatives and programmes in our school will include cyber-bullying where appropriate.

8.0 Availability of this policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website www.balscadden.com and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

9.0 Implementation and review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management.

Developed January/February, 2014

Reviewed 22/9/2014 19/10/2015 21/11/2016 2/10/2017 23/11/2020 18/10/2021
28/11/2022

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ (date)

Signed: _____
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3 Types of bullying behaviour

The following are some types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about drawings of the pupils or whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialize and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
- **Cyber-bullying:** See Appendix 2, Anti-Cyber-Bullying policy.
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, school books, pencil cases and other learning materials or interference with a pupil's place at their table or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft or property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

