



Anti-Bullying Policy

March 2015

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behavior guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Old Bawn Community School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behavior. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

"BULLYING IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED."

Mission Statement

Old Bawn Community School is a community of learning and personal growth and is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity, which includes our students and their families, our teachers and staff, our trustees and our adult students. We have a role in the wider community and in the overall educational community.

All parties to our school have their rights and duties within our structures.

Our commitment is to learning in its broadest sense and our procedures and practices reflect this. It promotes respectful relationships across the school community and it emphasizes respect for the uniqueness of each member of our community which commits us in turn to maintaining a caring working environment in which all can achieve fulfillment.

We want Old Bawn Community School to be a place where:

1. Students, staff and parents treat each other fairly and with respect.
2. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated; this includes verbal, physical, psychological, damage to property, extortion, intimidation, racist, deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, other forms of relational bullying, cyber bullying, identity based bullying (homophobic, transphobic), bullying based on a person's membership of the travelling community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
3. Students, staff and parents feel safe and are able to report bullying without being afraid. We encourage pupils, staff and parents to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior in

a non-threatening environment.

4. People support each other and problems are resolved.

The Board of Management here in Old Bawn Community School recognizes 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 behavior.

- A positive school culture and climate which is –
 1. Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 2. Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior in a non-threatening environment; and
 3. Promotes respectful relationships across the schools community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wise approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
 1. Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 2. 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 behavior (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On –going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

What is Bullying?

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

"Bullying is unwanted negative behavior, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time".

Department of Education guidelines on countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools' (September: 2013)

"Bullying is a behavioural problem which affects the lives of thousands of school children and their families. The humiliation, fear, frustration and social isolation and loss of self-esteem which children experience when bullied results in absenteeism from school, poor or deterioration in schoolwork, personality change, illness, depression and unfortunately sometimes suicide. Bullying knows no boundaries of age, sex or socioeconomic background. It can take many forms; it can be short term or continue over long periods, even years." *Anti-Bullying Centre, 'Bullying at School; Key Facts' (Dublin: 2001)*

Types of Bullying

There are many different types of bullying that can occur...

- **Verbal Bullying:** can leave individuals feeling angry, frightened and powerless. If individuals are unable to share their feelings with someone else, verbal bullying can leave them emotionally bruised and physically exhausted. Their powers of concentration can suffer, adversely affecting their capacity for learning. Verbal attacks can be of a highly personal and sexual nature. They can be directed at the individual's family, culture, race, sexual orientation or religion. It can include abusive language, spiteful teasing or making cruel remarks and spreading false and malicious rumours.
- **Physical Bullying:** is the most obvious form of bullying and occurs when a person is physically harmed, through being bitten, hit, kicked, punched, scratched, spat at, tripped up, having his or her hair pulled, or any other form of physical attack.
- **Gesture Bullying:** there are many different forms of nonverbal threatening gestures which can convey intimidating and frightening messages, for example gesturing a gun to a head or gesturing slitting a throat.
- **Emotional, Deliberate Exclusion, Malicious Gossip and other forms of Relational Bullying:** these are particularly hurtful because they isolate the individual from his/her peer group and it is very hard for the individual to combat as it directly attacks their self confidence and self image.
- **Extortion Bullying:** this type of bullying includes demands for money, possession or equipment, lunch or food and is often accompanied by threats. Individuals may also be dared or forced to steal from the school leaving them at the mercy of the bully and open to further intimidation.
- **Identity Based Bullying:** this includes homophobic and transphobic bullying, alienation and instigating unremitting misery for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender). It also includes bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller Community and those with disabilities or special educational needs.
- **Cyber-Bullying:** in an ever-more technologically advanced world, a new strain of bullying has emerged, which utilises web pages, email and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly. "

- **Damage to property:** this can include ripping clothes, damaging books, destroying property and taking property.
- **Once-Off Offensive Message –:** This includes a 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 behavior.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behavior, 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 behavior.

Negative behavior that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behavior.

What are the symptoms of being bullied?

Bullying can cause severe consequences and therefore should be treated seriously. Bullying can inhibit growth and development physically, emotionally and cognitively. Depending on the duration of the bullying an individual may suffer from both short-term and long-term consequences.

Short-term consequences:

- Being physically injured, having teeth broken, requiring medical attention.
- Feeling inadequate, losing confidence and lacking self-esteem.
- Losing trust in friends or in their ability to protect and support.
- Experiencing anger towards the perpetrator and living in fear of them.
- Dreading attending work/school each day.
- Losing appetite because of worry.
- Feeling sick, experiencing pains in the stomach and constantly holding back tears.
- Being unable to sleep at night, particularly on Sundays when the School week is about to begin.
- Being afraid to socialise outside of school in case the bullies may also be there.
- Being angry at the school authorities, teachers, and colleges for not preventing the bullying.

Long-term consequences

- Holding negative ideas about oneself throughout life.
- Avoiding conflict at the expense of being appropriately assertive. Achieving less academically or at work.
- Experiencing intense pessimism, depression, social anxiety or phobia, loneliness and isolation.
- Manifesting an increase propensity to complete suicide.

Signs that may appear if an individual is being bullied:

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or damage to clothes.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress - refusal to say what is wrong.
- Unexplained mood swings or behaviour
- Becoming withdrawn
- Becoming clingy
- Attention seeking
- Aggressive behaviour
- Out of character behaviour in class.
- Deterioration in educational achievements.
- Erratic attendance.
- Mitching.
- Lingerer behind in school after classes are over.
- Increased requests for pocket money or stealing money.
- Loss or damage to personal possessions or equipment.
- Artwork expressing inner turmoil.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Year Head | • Principal |
| • Tutor | • Deputy Principal |
| • Guidance Counsellor | • Assistant Year Head |
| • Chaplain | • Class Teacher |

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by Old Bawn Community School are as follows:

- **The anti-bullying campaign** – this is channeled through to the students through many departments but especially through the S.P.H.E. department. This campaign sets out to create awareness on what bullying is and on the various types of bullying and it also gives the necessary tool kit to deal with incidents of bullying that may occur.
- **Anti – bullying competition** – Students for 1st – 6th year participate in this competition using various forms of art, music, poetry, prose, etc... This gives an opportunity to utilize cross-curricular activities with the above departments.
- **Assemblies** - from time to time year heads and the principal address the area of bullying in each year group.
- **Communication and Personal Development Programs** – these are run to help our students to build up their self-esteem and to develop their friendship and social skills. These programs are a great strategy to use particularly in the areas of cyber bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- **Brochure** – a brochure has been prepared on ‘bullying in school’ (a guide for parents) and this is distributed to all parents / guardians during parent teaching meetings.

The school’s procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behavior and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behavior are as follows:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be investigated.

- 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 the public humiliation of the victim or the individual engaged in bullying, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all individuals concerned.
- When analyzing incidents of bullying behavior, 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 gang is involved each member should be interviewed individually and then the gang should be met as a group. Each member should be asked for his/her account of what

happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.

- If it is concluded 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 **Code of Behaviour** and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
- Each member of the gang should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face him or her from the other members of the group after the interview. This can be done by the teacher involved, guidance counsellors, chaplain, year head or tutor.
- Individuals who are investigating the cases of bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
- In cases where it has been determined that a student or group of students have been involved in bullying behaviour, meet with their parents or guardians as appropriate. Explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy. Discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
- Arrange follow-up meetings with all parties involved, with the eventual outcome being reconciliation between the victim and the bully.
- Victims may need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem and to develop their- friendship and social skills.
- Individuals who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

(Use Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behavior)

Sanctions

According to our negative referral system in *Old Bawn Community School* there are certain procedures which must be adhered to in dealing with incidents of bullying and Gross misbehaviour. All students should be aware that *Old Bawn Community School* does not tolerate bullying and should be aware of the consequences and punishments should one be involved in such behaviour.

Teachers should try and deal with immediate incidents of bullying behaviour on the spot always ensuring the safety of those involved. Write an account of the incident in the journal of the

perpetrator and keep a note for personal use. Detailing the date, time, individuals involved and an account of what you saw or heard happening.

All incidents should be reported to year head as soon as it is possible. Giving precise details as one has them. The absence of the Year Head the Deputy Principal or Principal should be informed. Serious incidents of bullying should be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal will then investigate the incident and deal with it according to school policy, deciding on sanctions, punishment, referrals and procedures that need to be implemented.

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

- Counseling
- Personal development programmes
- Restorative practice

As a school community we would like to highlight the following:

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment. The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- The school disapproves of vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupil's needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupil's attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents informed on procedure to improve relationships within the school community.
- The school recognises the right of parents to share in the task of equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the

interdependence of people in group and community.

- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility intolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction or the principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school.

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.

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 groups specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25th February 2014.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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. (Use Appendix 4 Checklist for annual review of the anti – bullying policy and its implementation)

Signed _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Date _____

Adopted by the Board of Management February 2014.

Reviewed: **March 2015**

Date of next review: **March 2016**