



**Letterkenny
Educate Together**
National School
ag fás le chéile - ag foghlaim le chéile

Anti-Bullying Policy

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

The core value underpinning all policies at LETNS is to create a school community of mutual respect. The school recognises that prevention is better than cure and aims to immerse the whole school community in the strategies that we have devised to promote respectful communication and prevent bullying.

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 Letterkenny 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 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 the issues of , gender bullying, 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. 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 often repeated over time. An isolated incidence of bullying can be determined via establishing intent to harm.

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 gender bullying, 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.

The crucial role of the bystander is recognised as being key to an effective bullying policy. Our aim as a school community is to empower every member of our school community to become an active bystander.

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

An active bystander intervenes by challenging a bully's attitude and behaviour towards the victim, either directly (to the child involved) or indirectly (to an adult) and, non-ambiguously, supports the person who is being subjected to the bullying behaviour. An active bystander engages actively and appropriately with the school's underlying principal of mutual respect.

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

Bullying behaviour thrives when a bullying mindset is accepted, when there is confusion about what constitutes bullying, when clear strategies/procedures are not in place, when children are too fearful/unsure to report or feel that nothing will be done about the situation if they do report.

Therefore this policy was devised:

- to clearly define what bullying is
- to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians
- to encourage and support children to report and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour to a significant adult in the school environment if at all possible or, if not, to report to any adult
- to devise measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour
- to provide support to all parties involved
- to promote our a positive school culture of mutual respect.
- Create a school community of active bystanders

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

- At Letterkenny ETNS the class teacher(s) of the pupil(s) involved will initially be regarded as the relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with reports of bullying.
- However, a pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any adult in the school and individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bully policy.
- The Principal will also be informed of any reports of bullying and may be involved thereafter if necessary.

5. The education and prevention strategies, at the appropriate and relevant level for each class, will be used by the school:

- Prevention and awareness raising measures are considered key to the implementation of this policy and involves strategies to create a community of active bystanders. Strategies will be focusing on promoting emotional intelligence and building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- Provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and self esteem.
- Prevention and awareness raising measures focusing on cyber-bullying by educating pupils on appropriate online behaviours and how to stay safe on-line.
- The school community has a responsibility to influence attitudes to respectful communication in a positive way and to ensure that a bullying culture does not thrive within the school.
- There are a number of existing curricular components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The Learn Together and SPHE programmes make specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integration, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe and RSE programmes at Primary level are the personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

address the problem of bullying behaviour. Other relevant programs are currently being researched, such Making Caring Common (Harvard University).

- The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama and PE. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, after school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects.
- Sporting activities can also be used to provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning self control. GAA and soccer coaching is offered to some classes from outside agencies and the athletics team is coached by members of the teaching staff.

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:

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. With this in mind the schools procedures are as follows:

- ***Whole School Approach***

Staff are informed of the Anti-Bullying Policy and the stages of intervention at the first staff meeting of the school year.

Parents are reminded of the Anti-Bullying Policy on the school website at the beginning of each school year and paper copies are available from the office on request.

New parents to the school are given a copy of the school's Anti-Bullying and Positive Behaviour policies on enrolment.

During the month of September the Anti-Bullying policy and Positive Behaviour Policy are reviewed with the pupils in an appropriate manner.

An annual Friendship week is held in the school in the 3rd term.

Monthly staff meetings assess the level and type of bullying behaviour that may be happening in the school.

The children in each class are given information about how to report incidences and other related issues.

The 'How I Feel about School' Checklist is completed by children each term. A modified version is completed in the Junior classrooms.

The children from 3rd – 6th class complete Anti-Bullying questionnaires on a fortnightly basis which are administered with the support of the HSCL teacher

Systems are in place for the children to be able to report easily.

Information about bystanders is displayed in each classroom and throughout the school.

- ***Guidelines for teachers***

(Responses to incidents of suspected bullying)

At all stages of this process the response from staff and other pupils to incidents of suspected bullying or bullying will be objective and empathetic. Any active bystanders involved will also be supported throughout this process.

- Sanctions used by the teachers should be in line with programmes being used throughout the school and adopt a restorative approach.

Stage 1 (Assessment stage) – Report to staff member

- Listen to the individual(s) involved.
- Acknowledge their statement, empathise and thank them for reporting the incident(s).
- Assure pupils that they will be kept informed of decisions taken as a result of their report.

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

Recording – Records are kept securely on the Aladdin system under the names of the relevant child/children involved

- Record to be kept in line with standard reporting template
- The purpose of these records is to aid memory regarding details of the incident
- To provide clarity when assessing the situation
- To allow school staff to identify and monitor any patterns of behaviour that may arise.

Reporting – To parents and staff

- The parents/guardians of pupils involved will be informed of the incident by phone or through written communication if appropriate.
- Staff will be informed of the incident at staff meetings.

Stage 2 – If there is another incident or if it is a definite case of bullying

Ongoing evidence

- Staff documents evidence of bullying behaviour or a critical incident towards a particular child or group of children.
 - Parent/guardian expresses concern about the child(ren) or further incidents
1. Parents/Guardians are contacted and a meeting is arranged.
 2. The Principal is informed.
 3. Each pupils and parent meets with the class teacher separately.
 4. Any concerns about the child/incident will be discussed at this meeting.
 5. An action plan (*see template) is devised (including appropriate sanctions) and a review date agreed.
 6. Appropriate support is provided for all parties involved.
 7. The Principal is informed of the outcome of the meeting.

Stage 3 –

If no significant progress has been made

The safety and wellbeing of all pupils in our school is of paramount importance. Sanctions may be implemented at this stage to ensure the safety of the pupil(s) reporting the bullying behaviour. These may include removal of the pupil exhibiting the bullying behaviour from the classroom or yard etc. while specific interventions are put in place.

- a. Placed on Report – The child who is exhibiting bullying behaviour will be placed on report. The child's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. The child has three meetings daily with his/her teacher and his/her progress is recorded at these intervals. This report is taken home daily. The report must be discussed at home and signed by the parents.
- b. Regular meetings related to being on report – Parents of the child on report will be asked to attend regular meetings with the Principal, class teacher and their child. The aim of these meetings is to discuss the report card, strategies that may be used to support their child and to monitor progress. Meetings will continue until deemed unnecessary.
- c. Regular meetings with the parents and child reporting the bullying behaviour – Parents of the child reporting the bullying behaviour will be offered regular meetings with the Principal, class teacher and their child. These meeting will continue to reinforce to the

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

child that when reporting incidents of bullying they are behaving responsibly and making a vital contribution to others and to the school community.

Stage 4 –

Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continues a meeting will be held with the parents/guardians of the child exhibiting the bullying behaviour, class teacher and Principal to address the ongoing issues and to determine the most appropriate next step. As part of this process a decision may be taken to involve outside agencies/interventions e.g. NEPS, ParentStop, Health Promotion Unit, parenting support etc.) This meeting will include a timescale for review.

At this point, a programme of formal sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the Board of Management. It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all children. Should this safety be compromised by continued bullying behaviour, sanctions may include a period of suspension during which time there will be on-going consultation with the parents/guardians to decide appropriate actions to be taken in the best interests of the child/children involved.

Again, the other members of the class involved will also be supported throughout the process.

Note: 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.

The following procedures will be implemented in all cases:

1. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
2. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). In this way, pupils will gain confidence in reporting. This confidence 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 behaving responsibly.
3. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners and all members of the school community must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
4. 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.
5. It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach taken from the outset.
6. Teachers should take a calm, unbiased, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, parents or staff.
7. Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

8. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all parties concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
9. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) 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.
10. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first and only as a group if appropriate. It may be helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of events if appropriate.
11. Each member of the group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
12. Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have determined that a pupil has 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 empathise with the pupil being bullied.
13. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of all parties involved should be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school should give parents the opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for the pupils.
14. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents and the school, if appropriate.
15. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately.
16. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
17. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording:

Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the *Department of Education's template for recording bullying behaviour* (Appendix 3). All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggestions that parents seek referrals from appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed.

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

Letterkenny ETNS Anti-Bullying Policy

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. This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 12th October 2021.

11. 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 (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2022