# Anti Bullying Policy

**Ratification of Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Athy Model School on 30th April 2014.

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**Review of Policy**

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on Tuesday 22nd September 2015

Ron Condell Chairperson of Board of Management

Yvonne Griffin Principal

Date: Wednesday 23rd September 2015

**Date of next review: September 2016**

**Introduction**

The Athy Model School community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

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).

The staff of Athy Model School is committed to cultivating an environment free from bullying. The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is to:

* end the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted),
* resolve the issues and restore the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a “Resolve and Restore” 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.

**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 Athy Model School 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.**

**Principles of Best Practice**

**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 climatewhichis 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; andpromotes 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 cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying .
* Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
* Supports for staff;
* Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
* On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

**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,

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 should 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.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying 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*. Details of different types of bullying are also given in Appendix 1 of this policy.

**The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying**

* In the first instance, the **class teacher.**
* If an incident occurs in the playground, the **teacher on playground duty.**
* In accordance with the school code of behaviour, **the principal** may be involved (serious one-off incident, repeated bullying behaviour).

**Education and Prevention Strategies**

**The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:**

**School Staff:** There is an annual whole staff review of Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy.

Children’s self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school.

Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others.

Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff.

Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

Teachers will be vigilant in their duty to supervise pupils and areas in the school grounds from where frequent incidents of aggression are reported will be monitored with extra care.

Teachers will discuss the school’s anti bullying policy with the pupils and use behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding a solution to problems.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour.

Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the following programmes: R.E., Social Personal and Health Education , Stay Safe, Walk Tall, SALT (conflict resolution), co-operative learning structures and the Arts.

Schoolassembliesare also used as an opportunity for teaching and modelling respectful and kind behaviour.

Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.

Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time. Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour.

**Parents and Staff:** Through presentations or other exercises, the staff/parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the relevant teacher (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

New parents are made aware of the school’s Complaints Procedure and Anti Bullying Policy during our annual induction afternoon in June.

**Cyber Awareness:**  Athy Cyber Awareness Week is held in conjunction with all other primary and post primary schools in Athy on a regular basis. The school will host pupil workshops on internet safety (3rd-6th class), followed by a Parents’ Night, on a regular basis.

**Identity based bullying** : Due to the sensitive nature of this, the school will deal with issues as they arise.

**Pupils:** Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other.

Pupils should report incidents of aggressive behaviour or bullying to their parents and teachers. There are post boxes in reception office and middle and senior classrooms in which pupils may post concerns to their teacher privately.Teachers will respond to these confidentially where appropriate.

The anti bullying awareness policy is taught to all pupils at the start of each school term at school assemblies.

The school promotes inclusion of SEN pupils in all activities where possible. There is a strong focus on developing social skills. A buddy system is used with SEN pupils and other pupils in the playground.

**Supervision of pupils:** The playground is well supervised by teacher and SNAs at breaktimes; the teacher on duty patrols both junior and senior areas. Pupils are provided with a plentiful supply of play equipment. During wet play, teacher on duty supervises pupils in GP Hall, along with SNAs. There is close monitoring of pupils by teachers during transition periods in school day (going to Art Room, library etc).

The school is not responsible for incidents of a bullying nature that occur outside school, whether on the school bus or elsewhere. However, the school may assist in facilitating a resolution with the parties involved where it is deemed necessary. Pupils who travel by bus are expected to treat each other with the respect that all pupils and their property are entitled to at **all** times.

**Procedures for dealing with bullying behaviour**

**The school’s procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies (i.e. the six step approach available from the “Dealing with Incidents” section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website) 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, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end*.* Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident.

The school, through the relevant teacher, reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

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 may contact the parents of both the bullying and the bullied child at this stage to inform them.

The relevant teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a mistake 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.

When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved, the relevant teacher will record all information in the Behaviour Book, to be kept in a file in the school office.

If a pupil has signed a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event, parents/guardians will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son’s promise. At this stage, the Recording Template will be used.

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 below).

All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in a file in the school office.

**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:

* 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;
* The Principal and relevant teacher may arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings;
* The pupil who is bullying may be placed on report. This means that the pupil’s behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The pupil’s parents are required to sign and return the report to school on a daily basis. The purpose of this report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the pupil, and to motivate the pupil to move away from negative behaviour. The pupil should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential;
* The pupil who is being bullied may also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the pupil to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class, or other strategies;
* Should the behaviour continue, the case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil who is bullying may be suspended from the school. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

**Support for pupils affected by bullying**

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,
* Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
* Helping bullied pupils to 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 (*if applicable*).

Bullying pupils:

* Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet,”
* Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
* Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it to 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,
* 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.

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

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.

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, be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request, 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.

**Appendix 1: Forms of Bullying**

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

* **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language,** *for example:*

Shouting and uncontrolled anger,

Personal insults,

Verbal abuse,

Offensive language directed at an individual,

Continually shouting or dismissing others,

Public verbal attacks/criticism,

Domineering behaviour,

Open aggression,

Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

* **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional,** *for example:*

Treating in a dictatorial manner,

Ridicule,

Persistent slagging,

Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.

Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family/social life/schoolwork

* **Interference with property,** *for example:*

Stealing/damaging books or equipment

Stealing/damaging clothing or other property

Demanding money with menaces

Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property

Marking/defacing property

* **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation***, for example:*

Condescending tone,

Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,

Writing of anonymous notes,

Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments, tricks or jokes,

Knowingly spreading rumours,

Belittling others’ efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,

Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),

Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),

Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,

Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

* **Ostracising or isolating,** *for example:*

Deliberately marginalising an individual

Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,

Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational

Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.

**Appendix 2: Advice for Parents**

**How to support your child**

* Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
* Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
* Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.
* Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
* Don’t dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
* Discuss the school’s anti-bullying policy with her/him.
* Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

**Signs of bullying**

* Anxiety about attending school.
* Deterioration in educational performance.
* Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour.
* Visible signs of anxiety or distress.
* Possessions missing.
* Increased requests for money.
* Unexplained bruising.
* Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her.

**What to do if your child is being bullied**

* Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
* Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him.
* Discuss with her/him what to do next – your child may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
* Encourage her/him to tell his teacher/principal.
* Contact the school as soon as possible by note or email or phone.
* Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.
* Monitor the situation during the following weeks and keep in touch with the school.