



Anti-bullying Policy

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 Boolavogue 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. The school community believes strongly that respect for all, at all times, must be at the core of the ethos of the school and the ethos of Boolavogue community.

The Board of Management and the staff of *Boolavogue National School* are 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
 - 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
 - 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 (via Aladdin), investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

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, transphobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

What is Sexual, Sexist or Transphobic Bullying?

Sexual, sexist or transphobic bullying is when an individual (or group), usually repeatedly, harms another individual or intentionally makes them unhappy because of their gender or sexuality. It is when sexuality or gender is used as a weapon by boys or girls. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back or by use of technology. Sexual, sexist or transphobic bullying is deliberate and almost always repeated. It can take many forms:

- spreading rumours about someone's real/created sex life - including the use of graffiti or social networking sites
- forcing someone to act in a sexual way
- distributing real or created images of sexual activity to humiliate someone, for example, using mobile phones/social networking sites
- using words that refer to someone's sexuality or gender as a general put down, for example, calling something 'gay' to mean that it is not very good
- continual taunts that questions someone's sexuality or gender.

What is Homophobic Bullying?

Just like any form of bullying, homophobic bullying can take many forms including, physical, emotional, and cyber. Homophobic bullying focuses on an individual's sexuality (whether this is true, perceived or just a form of harassment). Homophobic bullying can involve verbal bullying suggesting that the individual is gay. These taunts can make an individual feel confused about their sexuality and isolated in their own environment.

Homophobic bullying is deliberate and almost always repeated. It can take many forms:

- threatened or actual physical abuse or attack
- verbal abuse such as suggestive remarks, jokes or name calling
- display or distribution of offensive material or graffiti
- non-verbal abuse such as mimicry, offensive gestures or body language.

What is Cyber Bullying?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

- **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is ‘Bluejacking’ (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology)
- **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
- **Mobile phone calls** – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim’s phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible
- **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else’s name
- **Bullying via websites/social media** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and social media sites/apps such as You Tube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

1. **‘Flaming’**: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language
2. **‘Harassment’**: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
3. **‘Cyber Stalking’**: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety
4. **‘Denigration’**: ‘Dissing’ someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
5. **‘Impersonation’**: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets her/him in trouble or danger, or damages her/his reputation or friendships
6. **‘Outing and Trickery’**: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online
7. **‘Exclusion’**: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, like a ‘buddy list’

This list is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change.

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. Screenshots of above public messages can be submitted as evidence.

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

Who will deal with the accusations of bullying?

The class teacher(s) of the pupil(s) involved will deal with any issue arising as the class teacher has an overall view of the pupils behaviour on a daily basis. However, any teacher may act as the relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

The class teacher, after investigation, will decide if a behaviour constitutes bullying under the definition of bullying above. If the teachers deems that the issue is not bullying then he or she will follow the guideline in the Code of Behaviour to deal with the misbehaviour.

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

- The Stay Safe Programme
- SPHE
- Discrete lessons taught by all class teachers
- RSE programme, 5th and 6th class programme will address transphobic and homophobic bullying
- Weaving Well-Being: Positive mental health programme
- Antibullying workshops delivered to parents in conjunction with St. Cormac's P'rents' Association.
- Local Gardaí will be contacted to speak about bullying to both children and parents, in association with St. Cormac's Parents' Association, if available

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:

- A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNA's), bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners must report any incident of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- The teacher must pass the issue to the relevant class teacher of the pupil concerned. If there are more than one class involved, both class teachers will work together.
- The class teacher will investigate the issue and use their own professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how to best resolve the situation. The aim is to resolve the issue and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship between the parties rather than apportion blame. If there is no bullying then the issue is dealt with using the *Code of Behaviour*.
- The class teachers will inform the principal at an early stage when bullying has been confirmed.
- If there is a group involved, each member should be interviewed individually. Afterwards they should meet as a group. At the group meeting each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each others statements. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures from other group members. It will be recorded at this stage whether 1 or 2 adults interviewed the children. Where possible, two adults will be present.
- Pupils not directly involved can also provide useful information.
- If the teacher determines that bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher must inform the parents of the parties involved and explain that they intend to further investigate the issue. Parents must be given an opportunity, through a meeting, of discussing how they can reinforce or help the actions taken by the school and the support for their pupils.
- Where the teacher determines that bullying has taken place this must be clearly explained to the pupil that they are in breach of the anti-bullying policy and efforts must be made to get them to understand the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- If there are sanctions to be imposed then the sanctions are a private matter between the child being disciplined and his/her parents. Sanctions should be in line with the Code of Behaviour.
- After some time follow up meetings should be arranged with the parties included with a view to bringing both parties together if the pupil bullied is ready and agreeable. This can be therapeutic for the pupil bullied.
- In cases where the bullying behaviour has not being addressed after 20 school days

or where the bullying is considered a very serious nature it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 2 and forwarded to the principal.

- Where a parent is not happy with how the school has dealt with the issue they are referred to the schools complaints procedure where they would write a letter to the principal. If after this they are still unhappy they can write a letter to the BOM.
- If at the end of this parents are still unhappy the school must advise them of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil the advice of the National Education Psychological Service should be sought.
- In relation to bullying in schools the *Child Protection Guidelines 2011 Children First*, provide that in situations where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive the advice of the HSE or any other outside agency should be sought and acted upon.
- Any incident of bullying behaviour may be recorded and dated by the class teacher(s) on Aladdin. Any follow-up meetings/decisions may also be recorded and dated.
- If deemed necessary, bullying behaviour will be brought to the Chairperson of the Board of Management and discussed at Board of Management level.

Investigating incidents:

- The primary aim for the teacher investigating is to resolve any issue and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant class teacher. In this way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'.

- Investigate in a calm manner and ask questions sensitively. Teachers should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- At all stages, records should be kept by the teacher noting the dates, times.
- Interview pupils outside of the classroom situation to ensure privacy of all involved.
- Written reports from pupils may be appropriate.
- Full records of issues must be kept by the teacher and retained in the file of the pupil at the centre of the issue. There should be a written account of the steps taken by the teacher to deal with the situation from start to finish.
- If after 20 days the bullying behaviour has not been addressed then the teacher fills out a recording template at Appendix 2 and forwards to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- The school has also decided as part of this anti bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded in Appendix 2 immediately and reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The teacher retains a copy for his/her records.

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

We will help pupils who are victims of bullying by working on their self-esteem. This will be in conjunction with our support teachers:

- This involves discussing the incidents with the pupils
- Reassuring them that they were right to bring the events to the attention of staff
- Reassuring them that they were not telling tales and their actions will help others
- Pupils will be reminded that they should tell again if they have any new concerns
- The teacher(s) involved and the principal will check from time to time with the child that everything is ok

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management of *Boolavogue N.S.* 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 including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community in accordance with the Equal Status Act.

Ratification of the policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date] and will be reviewed annually.

Publication and availability of the policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website www.boolavoguens.ie and provided to **St. Cormac's Parents' Association**. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. A copy of the policy is in the **Boolavogue N.S. Pleain Scoile**. The policy will be discussed with the children as part of their SPHE lessons on bullying.

Policy Review

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 www.boolavoguens.ie and provided to **St. Cormac's Parents' Association**. 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

Appendix 1

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

Yes /No

Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	

Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____

Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date _____

Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____

Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____

Date _____

Principal



Appendix 2

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*** Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

