



## **Esker Educate Together Anti-bullying Policy**

**Revised document October 2023**

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by TUSLA, the Board of Management of Esker 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.
2. 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 cyber-bullying and identity based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
    - To explicitly teach the children the power of the bystander and how to report bullying to a teacher.
  - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

- Supports for staff. Protocols are reviewed at the start of each academic year during a staff meeting. All NQTs receive extra anti bullying training.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); Classes 2<sup>nd</sup>– 6<sup>th</sup> complete an anti bullying survey once a term (min) and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying Policy.

### 3. 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 – making a negative comment directed at or deliberate victimisation of someone on any online platform
- 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 will 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. Liking or commenting positively on a hurtful image, message or statement or facilitating victimisation on a social network will also be considered bullying. Online bullying will be dealt in accordance with the school's code of behaviour due to the very serious impact on children. i.e children will not be given the opportunity to sign a promise and will not be given anonymity. They will be immediately referred to the principal who will follow the code of 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*.

#### **4. The Relevant Teacher**

In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "**relevant teacher**". The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. However, parents who report a bullying incident will be asked to contact their child's class teacher, the relevant teacher, to discuss the allegation in the first instance. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with this policy. With regards to online bullying, the relevant teacher will report the incident immediately to the principal.

#### **5. Prevention and Awareness**

Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, this school shall endeavour to provide pupils (through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes) with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Initiatives and programmes (Walk Tall, Stay Safe) focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, should deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic bullying and racist bullying. Prevention and awareness raising measures must also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. Prevention and any awareness raising measures will focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the role of parents is recognised as important in this regard. The prevention and awareness raising measures also takes into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school.

#### **· Children with SEN**

Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, and joins up with other relevant school policies and supports and should ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.



## · Curricular Initiatives

Our teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe programme, at primary level, is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with negative behaviour and to be resilient.

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

- Specific classes in the Walk Tall programme
- Specific classes in the RSE programme
- Specific classes in Stay Safe programme.
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- Pupils council attendance at Anti Bullying seminars – Anti bullying ambassadors.
- Use of strategies and materials from Sean Fallon's anti bullying strategy – A Reform, Not Blame approach.
- Include Anti-Bullying as a major item on our agenda for staff meeting or Croke Park hours at least once a year.
- Host an Information meeting for parents on bullying and cyber bullying every second year
- Close work with PTA and NPC to help support parents to support students.
- Use of an outside online safety agency to help support students, parents and teachers.
- Host a bi annual 'friendship week' for pupils and parents in the school. This would feature an Anti-Bullying campaign, with poster and slogan competitions and would promote a heightened awareness of respect and friendship in the school.
- During this week, teachers will focus in their classes on work identifying and defining what is and isn't bullying behaviour (eg. Sean Fallon's strategies and resources) and encourage children to report incidents of bullying that they themselves have been the target of or the witness to. The children will explicitly be made aware of the "Reform and Not Blame" policy adopted by the school. Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers. We will try to empower children to recognise behaviour that is wrong and to give them the confidence to speak up when the witness bullying behaviour.

## 6. Procedures for Investigation

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 attached in Appendix A (Esker ETNS Anti-bullying Procedure Steps). This school has adopted the Sean Fallon "Reform and not Blame" approach to dealing with Bullying in our school. Our main aim is to establish the relationship between the children prior to the bullying event. We will take the following steps if a bullying incident is reported to a class teacher:

- The relevant teacher will conduct a class survey in her class to establish who may be involved.
- The relevant teacher will report any incidents to the anti bullying lead on the SMT who will record. The relevant teacher will also report any name where two or more children have reported (bullying may not be established in this incident)
- The relevant teacher will withdraw the alleged bully from the class and conduct an interview, using the interview template from the Reform and Not Blame pack. This interview will be conducted in an amicable way, seeking information and a pupil behaviour promise from the child involved. The teacher will use the provided resources in establishing the facts of the incident(s). In return for the written promise of treating other pupils fairly, equally and respectfully and specifically the child that they hurt, this child receives confidentiality and no sanction at this point. Parents and school principal are not officially informed. A member of the Senior Management team will provide cover for the class while the interview is taking place. The principal will keep a copy of the signed promise which will be kept in a file on Aladdin.
- In the event that 'a promise' is not kept, the child forfeits his/her promise of confidentiality. Principal and parents are now informed. The child is given a second chance to fulfil their original promise. This time the parents must counter-sign the written promise.
- If this promise is broken for the second time, the matter is no longer in the hands of the relevant teacher. It will be escalated to the principal and possibly to the BOM where suspension or other sanction will be considered.
- Online bullying falls into a different category due to the very serious impact that it can have on a child's mental health. If cyber bullying is reported to the teacher, the teacher will inform the principal and deputy principal immediately, who will investigate the matter. The consequences of online bullying are dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. A suspension may be recommended if deemed appropriate on the first occasion.

In addition, the following protocols are in place:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same, until a bullying incident has been established.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant

teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

- The relevant teacher must use the recording template (Appendix B) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within **20 school days** after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

## **7. Support for the child who has been bullied**

The class teacher will provide opportunities for the child to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Other teachers may be informed through our ongoing monitoring system, where children that we have concerns with, are highlighted to the staff so that we can observe their wellbeing in all areas of the school and the yard.

Depending on the effect of the incident on a child, counselling may be considered. In such cases, we would refer the child to our school counsellor, following agreement and parental consent.

## **8. Support for the child who has been the perpetrator of bullying behaviour**

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Again, a child may be referred to the school counsellor Micahel Ryan, with the consent of parents. The HSCL teacher will support the child in school and will be available for one to one meetings.

## **9. 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. We have increased our level of supervision for yard duty



and wet days to ensure the safety of all children.

## 10. 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. Children are informed of precautions to take when online. They are informed of the implications of posting negative and hurtful messages and images on public social sites. Forwarding private messages / hacking others accounts and posting as them falls under this category. Parents are educated in online safety through Zeeko and the NPC. All parents are informed of the digital age of consent.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 3rd of October 2023.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, and has been provided to the PTA. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department. It will be provided to the patron body, Educate Together.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every second school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and given to the PTA. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Chara U' Mad Date: 3/10/23

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Gemma Curry Date: 3/10/23 (Principal)

Date of next review: November 2024

