**An Grianán NS**

**School Position on Bullying**

The school community of An Grianán NS believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The principal, class teachers, special education teachers and SNAs in this school together seek, on an ongoing basis, to cultivate an environment in the school that is free from bullying.

This 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, this school 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 immediate priority, should a bullying situation arise, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a ‘Reform, not Blame’ 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 or having an impact on 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.

**Anti-Bullying Policy (including Cyber Bullying)**

1. 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 An Grianán NS 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;
* 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

1. 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 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 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour.  This list is not exhaustive.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

1. The ‘Relevant Teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school this year are the class teachers who may seek the assistance of the special education teacher assigned to their class and/or the SNA if appropriate, all under the support and guidance of the principal.
2. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school include  the following:

* The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year, particularly the relevant exercises from the “*Walk Tall*” and “*Stay Safe*” programmes, and
* At least five awareness-raising exercises from the ‘Awareness-Raising’ strand of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign* programme, pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, negative consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
* Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying situations and so become 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, either spontaneously or through surveys that are regularly used in the school each year – e.g. a survey of all pupils who can read and write once a term.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and 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).

Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications, as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups, parents/guardians are regularly informed of the anti-bullying activities of the school and encouraged to support its work.

* An annual anti-bullying/friendship week in the first term of each school year.
* A cyber Safety Awareness week in the second term of each school year.

1. The school’s procedures for uncovering, 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 the “4 Essential Steps” approach available from the *‘Resolving Bullying Situations’* section of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign website*, and are as follows:

* The ‘Relevant Teacher’ investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it but with an impact within it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
* 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 any pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
* Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the ‘Relevant Teacher,’ acting *in loco parentis,* 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 promisethat they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
* 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.Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others ‘in trouble’ but rather enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continues.
* When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.This report will be sent to the school principal.
* If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continues the bullying behaviour, this can no longer be considered a mistake. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed, at that “early stage,” and requested to countersign their child’s promise.  Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour would be regarded as a very grave matter and a sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below). All additional reports will be sent to the school principal.
* All documentation regarding bullying situations and their resolution is retained securely in the school by the principal.
* At every board meeting the principal will inform the board of the number of reported cases.

**Sanctions:**

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, the following 4 step sanctions may be imposed:

**Step1**

 For the first breach of promise – i.e. a resumption of bullying behaviour – s/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;

**Step 2**

In the unlikely event of a further, second breach of promise – i.e. a resumption of bullying behaviour – the ‘Relevant Teacher’ may contact parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour, to discuss the matter with them with a view to coming to a better understanding the reasons for the bullying behaviour, to suggest actions to be taken to help meet their child’s needs and to agree a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured.

**Step 3**

In the highly unlikely event of a further, third breach of promise – parent(s)/ guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the ‘Relevant Teacher’ and the Principal and a sanction may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour of the school.

**Step 4**

In the extremely unlikely event of a further, fourth breach of promise – the case may be referred to the Board of Management and a further sanction may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour of the school.

Every student on stage 1 will have a clean sheet following one full academic year of keeping a promise.

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

* **For bullied pupils**

* Ending the bullying behaviour,
* Changing the school culture through ongoing awareness-raising to (a) foster more respect for bullied pupils and for all pupils and (b) foster greater empathy  towards, and support for, bullied pupils,
* Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil (a reassurance bullied pupils often need), through ongoing awareness-raising and through the speedy identification of those involved in bullying and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
* Making adequate support and/or counselling facilities available to pupils who need them (who seem less resilient and are slower to recover, make friends and enjoy school life again), within or outside the school as applicable, in a timely manner,
* Helping bullied pupils 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*).

**For 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 admit to bullying behaviour are praised for their honesty.
* Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
* seeking other ways to “catch them doing the right thing” and giving appropriate praise,
* Supporting them to overcome learning difficulties through Support Staff provision and to overcome emotional and/or social difficulties through class management and pastoral care within the school.
* Helping those whose self-esteem is low 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, including creating opportunities to use appropriate praise,
* 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.
* Making adequate support and/or counselling facilities available to help remedy underlying issues for those who need them, within or outside the school as applicable, and to help them learn to meet their needs without violating the rights of others.

1. 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.

1. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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.

1. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on June 20th 2023.

1. 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 of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

11. 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 to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Appendix 1 – Examples of Bullying Behaviour***

***Bullying (Deliberate, Repeated, Hurtful Behaviour) 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

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or 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

Malicious tricks/derogatory 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