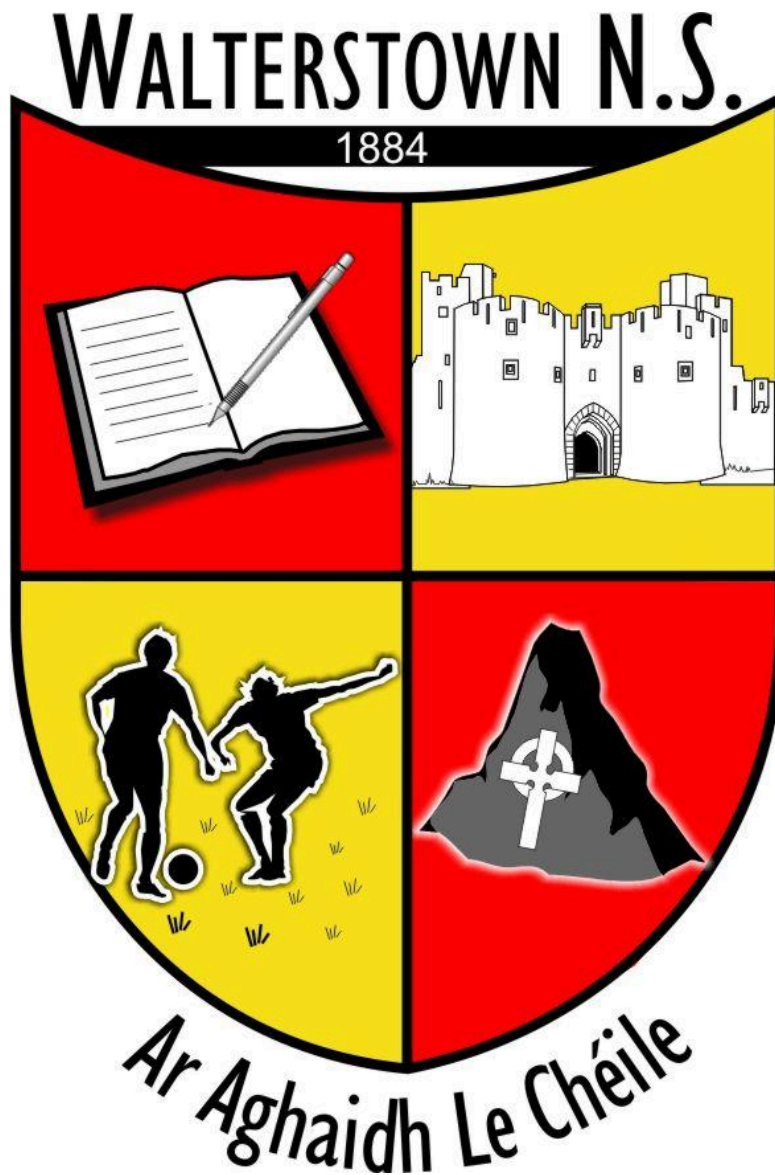


Anti-Bullying Policy





This document is intended to provide details of the main policies of Walterstown National School. It is intended to help the school community to understand the environment and approach of the school. This document is regularly reviewed. All feedback is encouraged and welcome.

| Version | Description | Authors |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 13/03/2019 | Review of existing policy & format | Board of Management |
| 16/11/2021 | Review of existing policy & format | Board of Management |
| 04/10/2022 | Review of existing policy & format | Board of Management |
| 24/09/2024 | Review of existing policy & format | Board of Management |

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Introductory Statement

Walterstown N.S. is a Roman Catholic School, under the patronage of the Bishop of Cloyne. We aim to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of our pupils: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. Our school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Vision

Our school also strives to accommodate individuality, while acknowledging the right of each pupil to education in a disruption free environment. We also promote a sense of responsibility towards the wider community. Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children. Teachers are recognised as professionals in education and work in partnership with parents.

Rationale

The role of the school is to provide the highest possible standard of education for all our pupils. A stable secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and may lead to psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school based measures and strategies. These should enable all members of the school community to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. Anti-bullying policy is considered a priority area of our school and this is the reason for the formulation of this policy.

Aims of Policy

In keeping with the philosophy of our school, as stated above, the anti-bullying policy

- seeks to raise a greater awareness of bullying among the school community, including staff, management, parents and children
- aims to help create an ethos and atmosphere within the school whereby bullying of any type is seen as unacceptable behaviour by all, including potential perpetrators and victims
- aims to create a situation whereby bullying behaviour is dealt with effectively, fairly and in a manner which will benefit the victim through the acquisition of skills to counter bullying behaviour, and which will benefit the bully by helping him/her through guidance and discussion, to see the anti-social, counter-productive nature of this type of behaviour



- will ensure any violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders is not tolerated. Incidents where they do occur are effectively and speedily dealt with in accordance with our Code of Discipline and Circular 40/97 from the Department of Education
- ensures that it is the Board of Management's duty to provide a safe place of work and schooling for employees and pupils respectively within the school
- will ensure that measures are taken to prevent or minimise the risk of assaults to teachers or other staff employed in the school
- will ensure that measures are taken in support of staff who have been assaulted or threatened with assault; and will guarantee that appropriate action is taken to safeguard against a recurrence

Introduction

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 Walterstown N.S. 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 published in September 2013 by the Department of Education and Skills.

Here at Walterstown NS we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. In our school it is made very clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is always wrong and will not be tolerated.

Key Principles

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact 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) 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;

(b) Effective leadership;

(c) A school-wide approach;

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

(e) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising) 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;

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

(g) Supports for staff



- (h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- (i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition

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, shared 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.

Examples of bullying behaviours

Emotional: Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting g. hiding books, threatening gestures etc

Physical : Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

Racist: Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual : Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Homophobic: Because of, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Verbal : Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Cyber : All areas of internet, such as email & social media misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calling. Misuse of cameras, videos etc This list of examples is non exhaustive. (See Appendix 1 for a further list of bullying behaviour.)



Relevant Teacher/s for investigating bullying incidents

The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher however any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

Education and prevention

The education and prevention strategies (as well as strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school include:

School-wide approach

- Implementation of our Code of Behaviour which promotes a positive, pro-active, respectful and consistent approach to behaviour management.
 - Distribution of a summary copy of the Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour to all parent(s)/guardian(s) when enrolling their children. (Note: Current copies are also available on the school website/app.)
 - Discussion of the school's anti-bullying policy with pupils at assemblies to outline and explain the policy which focuses on developing the pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying including its causes and effects.
 - Conducting an annual audit of professional development needs, at the beginning of each school year, with a view to assessing staff requirements
 - Whole staff professional development, through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources, as necessary, to ensure that all staff members develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and how to respond to it.
 - Promoting the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour through posters and class lessons.
 - The introduction of a Health and Wellbeing committee
 - Consistently recognising and rewarding positive behaviour
 - Fostering and enhancing the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Providing pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
 - Rigorous supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Encouraging non-teaching and ancillary staff to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
 - The implementation of our "Acceptable Use of IT" policy and ensuring that new parents sign this.
 - Using a playground buddy system to encourage a culture of peer respect and support
 - Running an "Annual Friendship February".
 - As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, the school through its curricular and extra-curricular programmes provides pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
 - Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell and bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place. (This
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is achieved through using the Stay Safe Programme and the antibullyngcampaign.ie online resources.)

Implementation of Curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes. Using programmes where necessary: Friendship Terrace, Friends for life.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes e.g Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme and Bullying in a Cyber World.
- Using Circle Time to enhance self-esteem and encourage open discussion
- Age-appropriate resources from the Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST), Department of Education and Skills and others such as Web Wise Primary teachers' resources from Internet Safety Ireland, Intercultural Education in the Primary Schools from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Toolkit for Diversity from Integrate Ireland.
- Facilitation of the Garda SPHE Programmes by Community Gardaí, covering issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- Preparation and or follow-up lessons as necessary by Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers to address the additional needs of SEN pupils in understanding and implementing skills learned in class-based Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programmes.
- Ensuring consistent implementation of other relevant policies including Child Protection, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use Policy, Parent-Teacher Meetings, Attendance, Health and Safety and the Code of Behaviour.

Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame. This is dealt with using the introduction of a Restorative Practice approach. Every effort will be made through parents meetings and class lessons to ensure that all involved (pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) understand this approach from the outset. However, the child/children may also be subject to sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour.



Reporting bullying behaviour

Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

Investigating and dealing with incidents

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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
- Where possible, incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher 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.
- It may also be appropriate to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident/s.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).
- The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been 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 see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied using the Restorative Practice approach and questioning.
- The child/children who have engaged in bullying behaviour may also be subject to sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour depending on the frequency or seriousness of the incident/s.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent s/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is



a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.

Follow up and recording

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's Complaints Procedures.

In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's Complaints Procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

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 judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports.

To monitor patterns of behaviour the "**Incidents Against an Individual**" template (Appendix 2) may be used. The incidents to be recorded may include those bullying behaviours which have been identified under the 'Examples of bullying behaviour' already listed in this policy

If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records (Appendix 3: Record of Bullying Behaviour) which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The '**Incidents Against an Individual**' and "**Records of Bullying Behaviour**" will be retained by the teacher and a copy provided to the Principal to be stored in the office. At the end of the school year, the file can be viewed by the next class teacher. It should be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template Appendix 1 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.

The relevant teacher **must** use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour.



Programme of support

In-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying and perpetrators to support their social & emotional development i.e. to raise their self-esteem develop friendships and enhance social skills. Supports may include:

- Monitoring and one to one work with class teacher
- Social skills/self esteem programme with SEN teacher
- Buddy/Peer mentoring system
- Whole class work e.g. lessons from programmes listed
- Group work such as Circle Time in class
- Self-monitoring system such as daily diary, behaviour targets or star charts

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children first and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardai/Tusla as appropriate.

If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies i.e. CAMHS, ISPCC, Barnardos to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or those involved in the bullying behaviour

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 including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Access to policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website/app and is available in hard copy on request from parents. Together with the school's Code of Behaviour it will be distributed in hard copy to parents of all new entrants. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

Review has been completed & will be made available to school personnel and published on the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 04/10/2021



Roles and Responsibility

All members of the school community, under the positive and supportive leadership of the Board of Management and Principal, have both a role and a responsibility in successfully implementing this policy. The policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis by the policy committee through feedback from members of the school community.

Implementation Date

This policy was implemented on 24/09/ 2024. Amendments implemented immediately.

Timetable for Review

This policy is to be reviewed at the beginning of the school year 2025/26.

Ratification and Communication

The amended policy was communicated to members of the Board of Management prior to the meeting on 03/10//2023. Parents will be made aware in the next school communication that the policy is available for viewing on the school website.

Date of ratification: 24/09/2024

Signed: Damien Ahern
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Rory O'Sullivan
(Principal)

Date: 24/09/2024

Date: 24/29/2024