

Phoenix Park School



# Anti-Bullying Policy

September 2021

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 the Phoenix Park Special 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.
  - 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

**3. 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 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.

**4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with serious incidents of bullying are as follows:**

- Emma Stokes, Principal
- Blanka Kane, Deputy Principal

**5. The Education and Prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:**

- A strong sense of community and cooperation between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents/guardians will be developed, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying.
- Careful planning of class groups each year.
- Recognition that some pupils don't interact well with others and the adoption of appropriate strategies to alleviate tensions.
- Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to

support the anti-bullying policy.

- Implementation of strategies to reduce identified risks such as delaying some pupils at home time, providing additional supervision in toilet areas, behaviour support plans, etc.
- Close liaison with bus escorts, drivers, parents and school staff regarding behaviours on school transport
- Implementation of positive handling strategies such as diversion, diffusion, de-escalation, re-directing etc.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying will be discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents/guardians are asked to contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

### Raising Awareness

- ***Each school must raise the awareness of bullying in its school community so that they are more alert to its harmful effects. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)***
- The school will emphasise that bullying behaviour is unacceptable by:
- Using assemblies to remind pupils of the school's anti bullying policy (**this is currently happening in class as whole school assembly are not currently taking place.**)
- All staff have undergone training in Trauma Informed Practice and Interventions which looks at why children might engage in bullying behaviours.
- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable; visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games

- Special events such as a Friendship Week
- Devising a school charter for display in classrooms and other prominent locations. The children will come up with 6 statements to include in this charter. We will receive two statements from each class. The final charter will be shared with all pupils in the school and a copy sent home to the parents.
- Staff awareness of pupils who have a documented history of engaging in behaviours that challenge and support provided to them to manage incidents where necessary.
- Discussion at teacher's weekly meeting on strategies to support vulnerable pupils throughout the school day in all areas of the school. Awareness of staff on the importance of taking the time to listen to children and to give them time to process what is said to them.
- Videos and open dialogue on the impact of bullying on people.
- Acknowledge mental health day and the importance of looking after our mental health and that of others. Look at the impact bullying can have on our mental health.

#### **Other Relevant Related Policies:**

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy and photo/video policy

#### **FOLLOW UP OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR:**

The Phoenix Park School's procedure for the investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour are as follows (as per Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

#### **Investigation:**

- All reports even anonymous ones will be investigated. All staff, parents & bus escorts, must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.
- The relevant class teacher/ SNA or Nurture Group Specialist will investigate and try to resolve any issues and restore as far as practicable the relationships of the parties involved. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour by pupils, staff or parents. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why? The Principal and /or Deputy Principal will be kept informed.

- Parents of pupils will need to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues.
- Any interview conducted during the investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the personnel/pupils involved.
- The teacher will fill in the template in Appendix 1. This will need to be done outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned. S/he will exercise professional judgement to ascertain if bullying has occurred. If more than one person is involved, each person will be interviewed separately initially and then brought together as a group where each person's perspective will be shared.
- If it is determined that someone has engaged in bullying behaviour, then the school will endeavour to make it clear that this behaviour is unacceptable by whatever means of communication is most effective for that person. This may include visual supports/social stories/comic book conversations/role play/video clips etc. The assistance of the multi-disciplinary team may be requested to develop appropriate resources/programmes in this regard.
- In cases where the teacher has decided that bullying has taken place, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents support in developing ways they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and support their own child.

## **Follow Up:**

- Where disciplinary sanctions may be required, it will be a private matter for the person being disciplined, his/her family and the school.
- Follow up meetings may be scheduled with the relevant parties as required or social skills programmes set up to develop co-operation and mutual respect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the teacher in the template at Appendix 2.
- In determining if it has been adequately addressed, the teacher will take into account the following factors:
  - Has the bullying behaviour ceased?
  - Have the issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable?
  - Has the relationship between parties been restored?
  - Has any feedback been received from their families or the Principal or Deputy Principal?
- Where a parent is not satisfied with how the school has dealt with the bullying case, the parents have the right to complain to the Board of Management. If they remain dissatisfied with local representations, they can decide to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

- Serious incidents of bullying behaviour may be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or the Gardai as appropriate.

### **Recording:**

The template in Appendix 1 for recording the investigation into allegations of bullying behaviour will be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Data gathered from these reports will provide information in relation to the presence of bullying behaviour in the school. This data will be collated at least once each year and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and made available to the Board of Management once each term. Appropriate responses to any issues identified should be drawn up and implemented.

Supports for children affected by bullying will include their engagement in programmes to develop their self-esteem, develop their friendship and social skills and promote their resilience to actions of a bullying nature.

### **SUPERVISION & 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 behaviours 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 steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils and 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20/10/21.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, and provided to the parents. 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, and be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. 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)

Date: \_\_20/10/21\_\_

\_\_\_\_Emma Stokes\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

Date: \_\_20/10/21\_\_

## APPENDIX 2: CHECKLISTS FOR ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Board of Management of Phoenix Park Specialist School will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation using the following checklist 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 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	
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 Phoenix Park Specialist School 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 \_\_\_\_\_
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management

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

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

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

<b>Date Created</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
<b>Date Ratified</b>	<b>October 2021</b>
<b>Date for Review</b>	<b>September 2022</b>



**Chairperson's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_