



MAYNOOTH EDUCATE TOGETHER SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Policy Statement

Every child has a right to pass safely through childhood and to an education free from fear and intimidation.

Objectives:

- The Maynooth Educate Together National School (METNS) will endeavour to keep the anti-bullying policy alive through an active process of consultation whereby all the constituted groups within the school community will be consulted prior to any proposed change in the school policy. The teaching staff will have the responsibility for the preparation of any amendments to the policy on bullying.
- The Board of Management through the Principal of the METNS will have the responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- This policy will be given to all parents/guardians in the school as a matter for public record. It will be displayed on the school website and will be available through the school office.
- Given the different perspectives on bullying which may exist within the school community, as far as practicable, the METNS will maintain an “open door” approach to the reporting of bullying. Any comments on the anti-bullying policy from any representative group within the school community will be considered by the Board of Management. The METNS will endeavour to create a supportive ethos which will break down the culture of secrecy and create a telling school.
- The METNS will endeavour to provide a multi-level approach to counter bullying.
- The METNS undertakes to inform all who use the school of its anti-bullying policy.

Rationale

- It is accepted that Parents/guardians are expected to cooperate with staff on bullying issues and that the staff acts in good faith when dealing with bullying behaviour.
- Bullying is generally intentional and directed and the victim experiences a degree of intimidation due to this behaviour. It is everyone's responsibility to report incidents of bullying to the school authorities.
- The METNS accepts that those employed in the METNS are obliged to act on any reported incident(s) of bullying.
- The METNS accepts that bullying may focus on the more vulnerable members of school and society, who are perceived as being different in some respects;

this may include being physically, culturally, emotionally or academically different from other pupils.

- The METNS recognises that there are different forms of bullying and that individuals may fall into different categories of bullies and victims. Different approaches may be required in dealing with these categories. Similarly, METNS accepts that a variety of bullying behaviours exist and that different approaches may be employed to deal with these.
- The METNS is aware that there are different forms of aggression which do not necessarily constitute bullying but will be dealt with under the Positive Behaviour Policy.
- The METNS recognises that children with Special Educational Needs may have a greater involvement in bullying as bully and/or victim. Special measures, which may not be described in this policy, may be required to deal with these children.

Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure the policy is in keeping with the ethos of the school
- To approve the policy
- To ensure policy is reviewed as required and at regular intervals
- To support the Principal and staff in implementing the policy
- To support training of staff in the area of anti-bullying
- To ensure all parents/guardians joining the school receive a copy of the Anti-Bullying Policy
- To provide the physical infrastructure to make school environment a more child-friendly place

Role of Parents/Guardians

- Parents/guardians will be supplied with our Anti-Bullying Policy and will be invited to report any suspicions to the class teacher or principal.
- The genuine concern of teachers for the child should be accepted. Any information regarding the involvement of the child in bullying will be communicated to the parent. Parents/guardians are asked to accept this information in good faith.
- Parents/guardians will be invited to devise and implement, with the class teacher, a plan of action regarding the involvement of their child in bullying. The plan would relate to action that would be taken by both the teacher and the parent.
- Parents/guardians are asked that when in the presence of their child, they will fully support any policy decisions relating to behaviour, discipline and bullying about which they have previously been consulted. If they need to question decisions, this will be done privately with the class teacher.
- Parents/guardians should acknowledge the unique role that both they and the teachers hold.
- Parents/guardians should acknowledge the different relationships which both they and teachers have with the child.
- Parents/guardians are asked to respect the need for confidentiality in all discussions re incidents of bullying.

Role of Teachers

- Teachers should acknowledge and respect the unique role that both they and parents/guardians hold.
- Teachers should acknowledge the different relationships which both they and parents/guardians have with the child.
- Teachers must respect the need for confidentiality when they are dealing with parents/guardians or children who are involved in bullying, notwithstanding the professional obligations of the teacher.
- Teachers should acknowledge the importance of the parent – teacher partnership; they will particularly recognise the needs of those parents/guardians whose children are involved in bullying.

Teachers should acknowledge the right of all children to a fair hearing.

Role of Children

- All children will be encouraged to respect the rights of others.
- By-standers will be encouraged to report any instances of bullying that they may be aware of.
- Children should tell their class teacher and parents/guardians if they feel that they are being bullied.
- Children should find private time and report instances of bullying to their class teacher.
- Children should stay within sight of staff during break times.

Our Anti-Bullying Measures as Part of the Curriculum

The school identifies aspects of the curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupil's attitudes and values.

- Stay safe
- Our ethics programme
- SPHE
- English
- Poems by the children about bullying
- Story – short story/novels cover this topic
- Oral work – broached informally through discussion on current affairs/news items
- Drama – role-play, how we deal with it
- Video on the subject
- Circle time – discussions
- Role of leader in class
- Issues in school, class, local areas
- Form part of class rules
- By use of posters
- Social stories

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others, isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the

behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying.

Our school community accepts the definition of bullying presented above. The school community accepts that definitions may vary, but all definitions have the underlying theme of wilful, conscious and intentional aggression which may be of a physical or psychological nature by a stronger individual or group (though not necessarily physically stronger) on an individual or group over a period of time.

Our school policy will also consider sexual harassment; anti-bullying, racial bullying, adult-child and adult-adult bullying, bullying in the workplace, bullying of or by children with special educational needs.

Our school policy recognises that it is not bullying when a teacher has made a fair and just comment on a student's work or, after investigating an alleged wrong-doing in accordance with school procedures, finds it necessary to discipline a child in accordance with the discipline policy of the school.

Physical Aggression

It includes pushing, shoving, punching, slapping, pinching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.

Damage to Property

Personal property can be of focus of attention for the bully, this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's bicycle, skateboard etc.

Extortion

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats. Victims' lunches or after school money may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully.

Intimidation

This is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon.

Abusive Telephone Calls

The abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying.

Isolation

A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some, or all, of the class group. The person engaged in bullying behaviour usually initiates this practice. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

Name Calling

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates, should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour.

Slagging

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter, which goes on a part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of any uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation.

Bullying by Text

“Bebo Bullying”

e.g. bullying on social network sites as Facebook, Bebo, Myspace, Twitter, instant messaging.

Sexual Harassment among School Children

The distinction between sexual harassment and general unacceptable behaviour is not clear and the invisibility of sexual harassment will continue unless children can name it and challenge it directly. Examples of sexual harassment include: inappropriate touching, use of derogatory names, insults or sexist jokes.

Homophobic bullying

Racial Harassment/Bullying

Examples include physical assault because of colour, ethnicity or nationality; use of derogatory names, insults or racist jokes; incitement of others to behave in a racist way.

Possible Signs of Bullying

- Be unwilling to go to school
- Be frightened of walking to and from school
- Change of route to school
- Deterioration in school performance
- Damage to personal belongings
- Change in mood of individual eg. May become withdrawn and may develop a stammer or display loss of confidence
- Become distressed and stop eating
- Phantom illness
- Requests for money
- Have nightmares
- Individual may refuse to say what is wrong
- Individual may give improbable excuses
- Self-harm

Before coming to school it is advised that parents/guardians consider any factors at home which may have coincided with the onset of behavioural difficulties.

Parents/Guardians Should Assess

If their child may be a bully

Possible indicators include:

- Child may be sullen
- May have violent outbursts
- May not be able to account for money or possessions
- May be acting differently

Parents/guardians should consider the following questions before coming to school:

- Who is your child bullying?
- What does your child do to this person?
- When does it happen?
- Where does it happen?
- How long has it been going on?
- How did you get to know of it?
- Has anyone reported it to the school?
- Why do you feel that he or she is involved?
- Is your child witnessing bullying behaviour at home or in the community?

Parents/guardians should record full details and inform the school.

If their children may be a victim

Possible indicators include:

- May be reluctant to go to school. This is not to be confused with school phobia.
- May be unable to explain why some of his/her belongings are missing or damaged.
- Change in behaviour – quiet or withdrawn.

Parents/guardians should consider the following questions before coming to school:

- What happened to your child?
- How often?
- Who is responsible?
- When did the bullying take place?
- Where did the bullying take place?
- Did your child report this?
- To whom was it reported?
- Who told you (parent/guardian) about this bullying?
- What are the signs that something is wrong?
- Is your child anxious about anything else?

Parents/guardians should record full details and inform the school.

Dealing with Bullying

On Approach to the School

All incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported will be investigated and recorded. The contact person in the school (usually the class teacher) will:

- Attend to the safety needs of the victim
- Acknowledge what the person says
- Listen actively and record factual information
- Will use the incident reporting form
- Follow agreed procedures

Procedures for Notifying and Reporting Incidents

- Minor incidents should be noted by the class teacher and dated in Behaviour Book. If a member of staff notices a pattern of what he or she perceives to be bullying in the yard, they should inform the class teacher or Principal.
- When the class moves on, the succeeding teacher should be informed (via the Behaviour Book) of any problems that existed.
- If parents/guardians have concerns about the child being bullied they should inform the class teacher.
- Reports of bullying either from parents/guardians or a staff member should be recorded. The teacher should investigate. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred, the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed.
- Parents/guardians of those involved should be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter by the teacher. It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly and their reports will be recorded.
- Behaviour Book will begin in Junior Infants and stay with each class as they move up through the school to 6th class.

Principles for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

- Calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach.
- Incidents are best investigated at times when the rest of the class are not present eg. Break time or after school.
- Teachers should speak separately to the children involved.
- Members of a gang should be met separately and as a group.
- Children are given the opportunity to relate their own version of the event.
- Parents/guardians should be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred.
- Follow-up communication with the child/parents/guardians of the bullied child to check that no further difficulties have arisen and note meeting in the Behaviour Book.

Investigation/Reporting of Alleged Bullying

The contact person will:

- Step 1 - Interview with the bullied pupil
- Step 2 - Arrange a meeting for all those involved (ie. Victim bully)
- Step 3 - Define the problem

Strategies for Managing the Bully

While the school will endeavour to offer support and assistance to the perpetrator, the person who is bullying must accept such behaviour will not be accepted.

At the initial meeting with the bully, the teacher will:

- Define the problem
- Decide on a course of action
- Involve him/herself in designing a programme to change this behaviour.
- The child will participate in determining reasonable sanctions which will be used if he/she continues to bully.
- Parents/guardians do not necessarily have to be involved at this stage. The teacher involved will file a copy of this programme signed by the child concerned and parent, if deemed necessary.

If the bullying persists and involves the same individuals or if the bully bullies other individuals, METNS will contact the parents/guardians and request that they visit the school and inform them about the persistent pattern of bullying. In extreme cases, in consultation with the parents/guardians, a behavioural contract will be drawn up.

If there is serious or persistent bullying, the Board of Management will decide on whether to suspend or expel the bully concerned. This is covered under the rule for National School No. 130 as included in Circular 20/90 and in the School's Positive Behaviour Policy.

Dealing with "Bully Gangs"

- The "No Blame Approach" may be employed for dealing with "Bully Gangs".
- The victims will be met separately, the victims will be given an account of what happened.
- Every member of the "gang" will be interviewed and they will write down what happened.
- It will be agreed with every member of the gang separately what is expected of him/her and discussed how he/she has broken school guidelines.
- The "gang" will be interviewed as a group. As a group, each member will state what happened. It will be necessary to ensure that everyone is clear about what has happened.
- Strategies will be decided which involve children in solving the problem eg. Method of shared concern no blame approach.
- False excuses or redefinition of incident will not be accepted.

Dealing with the Victim

Every effort will be made to re-inforce the self-esteem of the victim. It may be necessary to find out what type of victim the pupil is. Is he/she a classic victim, a colluding victim, a provocative victim? The victim will be encouraged to find ways in which they can improve the situation. If the victim is a provocative victim, then he/she needs to realise that their own behaviour is contributing to the bullying behaviour.

Guidance for Victims

The school curriculum can be employed specifically in this area e.g. drama, role play, Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, videos, circle time. If it is the view of the Principal that the child would benefit from professional counselling, the school will communicate this view to the parents.

New Children to the School

Given that a new child to the school might be more vulnerable to bullying or has a history of involvement in bullying, the school may:

- Require parents/guardians to forward all documentation, regarding their previous placement.
- Contact the previous school or institution attended by the child (with parental consent).
- With parental consent, contact any other body that may have had an involvement with the child in question.

Children with Special Educational Needs

All teachers and parents/guardians need to be aware that children with special educational needs (which include children with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties) tend to have greater involvement in bullying. The child with special educational needs may have a heightened sensitivity and may over-react to certain situations. These situations will be addressed according to the Special Educational Needs Programme or Individual Educational Programme of the children concerned. In so far as is appropriate for the individual child, policy procedures will be adhered to.

Adult Bullying/Harassment

The procedure set out below may be initiated in relation to any of the following circumstances, which may occur in the workplace or otherwise in the course of employment.

- Adult bullying
- Sexual harassment or
- Harassment on other specified discriminatory grounds which could in the circumstances be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

Any such behaviour is not acceptable within the school. A complaint of sexual harassment or bullying may result in disciplinary action. Where a complaint of sexual harassment or bullying is not upheld, no action shall be taken against the complainant provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and the disciplinary procedure invoked.

It is also open to any member who considers that he/she is being discriminated against, to contact his/her CEC District Representative or INTO Head Office with a view to referring a complaint to the Director of Equality Investigations or Labour Court, as the case may be.

For the purposes of the procedures outlined in this document, the METNS adopts the definition of bullying set out by the Health and Safety Authority which is:

“Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons. Bullying is where aggression or cruelty, viciousness, intimidation or a need to humiliate, dominate the relationships. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while to be condemned, should not be described as bullying. In the workplace environment there can be conflicts and interpersonal difficulties. Many of these are legitimate industrial

relations difficulties which should be dealt with through the appropriate industrial relations channels. Only aggressive behaviour which is systematic and ongoing should be regarded as bullying.”

Adult bullying can take many forms which usually include:

- intimidation or harassment
- aggression
- verbal abuse
- humiliation
- undermining
- dominance or abuse of power
- different or unfavourable treatment
- exclusion or isolation

Key features of adult bullying are that the behaviour is generally:

- persistent and/or systematic
- unwanted
- subtle
- non-physical

The exercise of legitimate management functions, in a reasonable and fair manner, does not constitute bullying.

Bullying/Harassment Procedures

Preamble

The procedure outlined below is designed to address adult bullying, sexual harassment or other harassment arising in the workplace or otherwise in the course of employment, in a fair and effective manner. In implementing the procedure, it is recommended that emphasis should be placed on assuring the party who considers that he/she is being bullied/harassed that his/her complaint is acknowledged, that the matter will be investigated effectively and sensitively and in accordance with due process.

Equally, where it is found that bullying or harassment has occurred, the emphasis, firstly, is to ensure that the offending behaviour immediately cease and secondly, to help the offending party acknowledge that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and that steps must be taken to address the matter constructively thereby avoiding any recurrence.

It is important to ensure that resolution is achieved at the earliest opportunity. Further, it may be appropriate for the victim or the offended to attend counselling or obtain such other help as may be required.

Stage 1: Address the Matter

1. The party (party A) who considers that he/she is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other specified discriminatory grounds, should decide to address the matter. However, in light of the potential effects of bullying or harassment on an individual, including loss of confidence, extreme

upset, anxiety or fear, a party may initially decide to seek INTO counselling, in order to consider the most appropriate application of the procedures, in the circumstances.

2. Party A should keep a record of the pattern of behaviour or instances where he/she considers that bullying/harassment has occurred. The record should contain details such as dates, times, persons present, details of what was said or what occurred.

Stage 2: Informally Address the Problem

1. The party who considers that he/she is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other discriminatory grounds (Part A), should request a meeting with the other party (B), in order to discuss matters. The following should apply:
 - where necessary, the meeting may be facilitated by a third party, generally a teaching colleague;
 - party A should clearly outline his/her difficulties and should clearly object to the bullying/harassment and request that it stop
 - it is important that party A bear in mind, that the other member of staff may not be aware that his/her behaviour is causing difficulty;
 - both parties should seek to resolve their differences and establish a pattern of interaction exclusive of any forms of bullying/harassment;
 - Party B may respond to party A at that meeting or if requested, should be given an opportunity to consider his/her response, in which case the meeting may be adjourned. Party B should respond to a constructive manner;
 - the resolution, as appropriate, may include any of the following eg. A commitment to cease the particular behaviour, modify the behaviour, plan to eliminate situations where the parties would be in conflict or monitoring.

Alternatively, it may emerge as a result of the discussions between the parties, that there may have been a degree of misunderstanding in relation to certain behaviours and the resolution may make provision for compromise or appropriate explanation or acknowledgement.

2. If there is no satisfactory indication of resolution between the parties, party A should refer the complaint to stage 3, ie formal procedures.

Stage 3: Principal Teacher or Chairperson of the Board of Management

1. Stage 3 provides a mechanism for the principal teacher to intervene and resolve the matter. However, if the principal teacher is one of parties, the chairperson of the board of management should then be involved, in an individual capacity, in order to achieve resolution. In circumstances where the chairperson may also be involved at Stage 2, another member of the board may be designated to intervene.
2. Party A should advise party B that he/she is proceeding with Stage 3.
3. Party A should state his/her complaint in writing and request the principal teacher (or chairperson of the board of management, as the case may be) to investigate the matter.
4. The principal teacher (or chairperson of the board of management, as the case may be) should:
 - obtain background details including details of what occurred at the previous stage

- consider the patterns of behaviour and the timescale
 - hear the parties and seek to resolve the matter
 - act in a fair and impartial manner and deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem and the principles of the process
 - exercise judgement and make decisions which he/she considers necessary to resolve matters
5. The outcome of the discussions should be noted by the parties
- The matter should be dealt with confidentially
 - Where resolution has not been possible and particularly where there is a likelihood of the offending behaviour continuing, either party or the principal teacher (or the chairperson of the board of management as the case may be), should refer the matter to the board of management in accordance with Stage 4.

Stage 4: Board of Management

- It is open to any of the parties or the principal teacher (or chairperson of the board of management, as the case may be) to refer the matter to the board of management for investigation. The referral should be in writing and dated and should include a copy of the written complaint.
 - The board of management should consider the issues and investigate the matter.
 - The board may enquire into the background of the difficulties including obtaining details on the sequence of initiatives taken at previous stages
 - The board or the chairperson of the board may meet teachers individually or collectively and may also request written submissions from the parties, having regard also to the principles of due process
 - The board may request the principal teacher to furnish a written submission
 - The board may afford the parties an opportunity to present their case orally at a board meeting, in each other's presence
 - Following oral presentations the board of management may designate the chairperson to meet with the parties again, separately or jointly, if further clarification is required or to work towards resolution
 - The board of management may convene a number of meetings in order to achieve resolution
 - The board of management shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem.
1. Having considered all matters, the board of management should reach a view on the matter not later than 20 school days after receipt of the written request/referral.
 2. Where the board of management finds that bullying/harassment has not occurred, both parties should be informed accordingly. No action shall be taken against the complainant provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and appropriate action taken.
 3. Where the board of management finds that bullying/harassment has occurred, the board should deal with the matter appropriately and effectively.

This may include:

- the issuing of a clear warning that bullying/harassment is not acceptable in the school workplace and that it will not be tolerated
 - a demand that all forms of bullying/harassment cease and that acceptable patterns of interaction be established between the parties
 - an instruction to the offending party that he/she apologise / express regret or give an assurance that the bullying/harassment behaviour will cease
 - seeking a commitment to attend counselling or the welfare service
 - more serious disciplinary sanctions as may be commensurate and appropriate, such as:
 - oral warning
 - written reprimand
 - written warning
 - final written warning
 - suspension
 - dismissal
4. As part of the resolution, the board of management should monitor the situation and should put systems in place to ensure that it is kept informed that resolutions are being implemented. The board of management should keep matters under review.

Plan for reviewing the policy

This Policy will be reviewed and evaluated regularly and any training needs arising from implementing such a policy will be addressed.

Approved by the Board of Management:

Date: 6th October 2009

Signature: