



# Gaelscoil Uí Choimín

## Anti-Bullying Policy



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 Gaelscoil Uí Choimín 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.

### Aims of the Policy

- i. To create a positive school culture and climate that is inclusive and welcoming of difference;
  - ii. To create a school climate which is open, supportive and encourages pupils to disclose and discuss bullying behaviour;
  - iii. To raise awareness amongst the entire school community (including school management, teachers, pupils, parents, volunteers etc.) that bullying is unacceptable behaviour;
  - iv. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring through which all aspects of school activity are kept under observation;
  - v. To provide procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour;
  - vi. To provide procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour;
  - vii. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour;
  - viii. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour; and
  - ix. To facilitate ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy.
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.
- Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in **Appendix 1** of this policy.
4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is as follows:
- Class teacher
5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:
- Promoting a positive school culture
  - As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, schools should, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
  - Effective presentation of the SPHE curriculum
  - Friendship week (where children come together to develop and practise friendship skills)
  - Effective delivery of the *Stay Safe* programme.
  - Develop projects and programmes geared towards the understanding of bullying.
  - Information talks for children
  - Distribution of this policy
  - 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.
  - Prevention and awareness raising measures must also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Prevention and any awareness raising measures should focus on the following:
    - educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour,
    - how to stay safe while on-line
    - on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.The school-wide approach and the role of parents is of importance in this regard. The prevention and awareness raising measures will also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school.
  - Promoting co-operation and group enterprise through team sports and group-work (e.g. Paired/groupwork, inter-school and intra-school competitions).
  - Using sporting activities as an opportunity for channelling and learning how to control aggression.
6. 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 as follows:

- i. The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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);
- ii. 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;
- iii. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- iv. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- v. Parents 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;
- vi. It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- vii. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- viii. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- ix. 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;
- x. 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;
- xi. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- xii. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- xiii. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- xiv. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- xv. 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;
- xvi. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- xvii. 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. This can have a therapeutic effect;

- xviii. 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 relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 5**;
  - xix. 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; and
    - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
  - xx. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
  - xxi. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows: The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:
- i. 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;
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 5** 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 at **Appendix 5** 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 at **Appendix 5** 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.

### **Supports for pupils affected by bullying For those who have been bullied:**

- Opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self- esteem

- Opportunities to participate in activities designed to develop friendship + social skills and thereby build resilience
- Counselling (if necessary)

**For those involved in bullying behaviour:**

- Ongoing assistance needed
- For those with low self esteem- opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth (ie choosing them for jobs in class or school)
- Counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

10. This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and 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 and be otherwise 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: Máire Uí Fhloinn  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 09/10/2023

Signed: Bríd Ní Chomhraí  
(Principal)

Date: 09/10/2023

## **Appendices**

- 1. Types of Bullying**
- 2. Impacts of Bullying Behaviour**
- 3. Indicators of Bullying Behaviour**
- 4. Practical Tips to Build a Positive School Culture**
- 5. Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour**
- 6. Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation**
- 7. Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy**

## Appendix 1 - Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
- **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. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

## **Appendix 2: Impacts of bullying behaviour**

Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.

Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.

There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

## **Appendix 3: Indicators of bullying behaviour**

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- i. Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- ii. Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- iii. Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- iv. Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- v. Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- vi. Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- vii. Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- viii. Possessions missing or damaged;
- ix. Increased requests for money or stealing money;
- x. Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- xi. Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.



## Appendix 4 - Practical Tips to help build a Positive School Culture

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines. (ie certificate for Student of Week)
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
- Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

## Appendix 5 - Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour


3. Source of bullying concern/report  
(tick relevant box(es))\*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents  
(tick relevant box(es))\*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) \*

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Relevant Teacher)

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6 - Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used 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.

1. 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?	Y
2. Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to parents?	Y
3. Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	Y
4. 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?	Y
5. Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	Y
6. Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	Y
7. Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	ongoing
8. Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	ongoing
9. Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	Y
10. Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	Y
11. 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?	N/A
12. Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	N
13. Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	N
14. Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	N
15. 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?	n/a
16. Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	N
17. Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	n/a

Signed: Máire Uí Fhloinn  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Bríd Ní Chomhraí  
(Principal)

Date: 09/10/2023

Date: 09/10/2023

## **Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy**

To: Gaelscoil School Community

The Board of Management of *Gaelscoil Uí Choimín* 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 09/10/2023

This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 6 of the Department's Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Signed: Máire Uí Fhloinn  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 09/10/2023

Signed: Bríd Ní Chomhraí  
(Principal)

Date: 09/10/2023