

Ashton School

Anti-Bullying Policy

0. Preamble

Ashton School aims to encourage each student to develop his or her full potential, to mature as an individual and to become a constructive and caring member of society.

The school aims to create and maintain a happy and caring climate that encourages and rewards students to respect the feelings of others. This is reflected in our School Code of Conduct which is displayed in all classrooms throughout the school. We try to develop an understanding among our students that unkind actions and remarks are completely unacceptable, even if they are not intended to hurt. We ask our students not to tolerate bullying behaviour and we emphasise that it is the responsibility of everyone, and not just the victim, to report it.

Every student has the right to enjoy learning and leisure time in school in a safe and secure environment. Bullying and intimidation of others is completely unacceptable.

1. Legal Requirements

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 Ashton 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. Board of Management

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. Definition of Bullying

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.

The following is a list of some of the types of bullying that can occur amongst students:

- Humiliation; including name-calling, reference to ability etc.
- Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language
- Verbal aggression/abuse, anonymous or otherwise
- Physical aggression/abuse or threatened abuse
- Aggressive or obscene language
- Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.
- Victimisation; including very personal remarks

- Exclusion and isolation
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker
- Threats, including demands for money
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation
- Cyber-bullying
- Unauthorised photography, audio and/or video recording

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

4. Relevant Teachers

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the Year Heads. Year Heads may seek advice and assistance from the school Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain in dealing with bullying issues.

Any member of staff who receives a report of an incident or behaviour which may constitute bullying is responsible for bringing the information to the attention of the relevant Year Head so that the matter can be dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that are used in the School to discourage all types of bullying are outlined in this document as Appendix 1: *Examples of how the School Ethos regarding Bullying is communicated*.

The following subjects also contain content on anti-bullying: Social, Political and Health Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), and Religious Education (RE).

6. Procedures for investigation, follow-up, recording and intervention

Investigation, Follow-up and Intervention

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:

All reports of bullying should, where possible, be made directly to the Year Head, but a report may also be made to any teacher, any member of staff or a senior student. Where a report in the first instance is made to a teacher, other member of staff or student, the staff member or student receiving the report must inform the relevant Year Head promptly.

Non-teaching members of staff must report incidents of bullying behaviour which come to their attention.

The Year Head will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. The Year Head will be responsible for ensuring that all reports brought to his/her attention, including anonymous reports, are investigated and dealt with.

The primary aim of the Year Head in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

In dealing with incidents, the Year Head will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. Year Heads may seek advice and assistance from the school Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain in dealing with incidents

Those allegedly involved will be interviewed. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first and later met as a group so that everyone can be clear about each other's statements. They may also be asked for a written account of the alleged behaviour.

Where it has been determined by the Year Head that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage by the Year Head to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).

Parents and students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving bullying-related issues.

All parties involved will be spoken with and a strategy for resolving the behaviour will be agreed by all involved. All students involved will be reminded of their commitment to the anti-bullying policy.

Strategies for resolving the behaviour may include:

- Efforts will be made to get the perpetrator(s) to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- The perpetrator(s) will be asked to reflect on their behaviour.
- The perpetrator(s) may be required to re-affirm their commitment to the School's Code of Behaviour and Discipline. The perpetrator(s) will be informed by the Year Head that their behaviour is a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline.
- If students are agreeable, a supervised meeting may be arranged between them.
- Following investigation and consideration, sanctions may be imposed in line with the School's Code of Behaviour and Discipline.

The Year Head will monitor the behaviour of the students involved to determine whether the bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed. In determining this the Year Head will take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.

- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as 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.

Following the intervention above, if the behaviour is considered to be unresolved and the behaviour persists, parents/guardians may be invited to a meeting with the Deputy Principal or Principal. In such cases parents/guardians will be reminded of the content of this policy and the School's Code of Behaviour and Discipline.

Reference may be made to the Code of Behaviour and Discipline which states that infringements of the school rules will result in sanctions which are deemed appropriate in the circumstances. These sanctions may include suspension or recommendation for expulsion.

All parties of the persistent behaviour may be recommended external counselling or Social Services.

In accordance with Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, serious instances of bullying may be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services or the Gardaí as appropriate. In consultation with these agencies an additional response may be required.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the School has dealt with a bullying case appropriately, the parents shall address their complaint in writing to the Secretary of the Board of Management. In the event that a parent has exhausted these procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording and Reporting

All records of bullying behaviour shall be maintained in accordance with data protection legislation and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

While all reports, including anonymous reports, of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head, the Year Head 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.

If it is established that bullying has occurred, the Year Head shall 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.

The Year Head will use the Recording Template in Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour 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 shall submit the report to the Principal or Deputy Principal. It should

also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 3** does not in any way preclude the Year Head from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

The Principal or Deputy Principal shall report at every regular meeting of the Board of Management on any instances of bullying that have been reported using the template as well as the interventions and/or sanctions by the School. The reports shall be recorded in the minutes but the students involved shall not be identified.

The implementation and effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy shall also be frequently included as an agenda item for staff meetings to ensure that concerns about the policy, or the welfare of individual students, can be shared effectively and addressed.

7. Programme of Support for working with pupils affected by bullying

Subject to the constraints of the resources provided by the DES, the school will endeavour to provide support for students who have been bullied. Many students will be able to continue their lives without additional support, but some may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills or to build resilience.

Subject to the constraints of the resources provided by the DES, the school will endeavour to provide support for those students involved in bullying behaviour. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others, or they may need activities to help them develop maturity or increase feelings of self-worth.

Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management endeavours to ensure 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. Adoption of Policy


This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th May 2014 & again on the 15 December 2020


11. Availability of Policy Document

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patrons if requested.

12. Review of Policy

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 provided to the Parents' Association. 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)

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 14/11/2023

Date: 14/11/2023

Date of next review: November 2024

Appendix 1

Examples of how the School Ethos regarding Bullying is communicated

In Ashton School, emphasis is placed on politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property. Teachers and staff are committed to creating and maintaining an atmosphere in the school in which bullying is not tolerated.

Ashton School does not tolerate bullying or intimidation of any kind. Bullies rely on our silence. It is important that bullying behaviour is reported at all times. Ashton School is both a “telling” and a “listening” school.

Examples of how the school ethos regarding bullying is communicated:

- All parents are sent a copy of the school Code of Behaviour and Discipline to be signed as accepted by all students and parents.
- All 1st year students and new entrants are informed that Ashton School does not tolerate bullying and will be pro-active in identifying bullying behaviour.
- The Ashton “School Statement on Anti-Bullying” will be displayed throughout the school. (*Recommendation*)
- An anti-bullying module will be run in First Year. (*Recommendation*)
- Reference is frequently made at morning assembly to the school ethos and to the rights and responsibilities of all at school to feel secure.
- The Buddy System is in operation in which a senior student buddy is assigned to a group of 4-6 First Year students. This means that every First Year student knows a senior student in whom they can confide. They are encouraged to report any problems, including bullying, to their senior buddy.
- The Year Heads get to know students throughout their time in the school and frequently emphasise the importance of letting them know if there is a problem – for them or for others in the class.
- Workshops on anti-bullying and mental health awareness are organised for students e.g. Shout Out etc.

Appendix 2

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

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.
- 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 and/or the Parents' Association 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.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.



Appendix 3

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	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

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

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

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

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____(Year Head) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

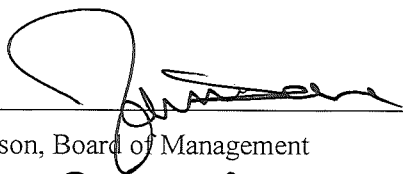
Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: Patrons, School Personnel, Parents and Students

The Board of Management of Ashton 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 14th November 2023.
- 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



Date

14/11/2023

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed



Date

14/11/2023

Principal