
Monkstown Park

Anti-Bullying Policy



1. In accordance with 'good practice', the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Monkstown Park Junior School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of discipline. This policy fully complies with good practice and the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with pupils, teachers, management, Board of Management, parents, office and all ancillary staff.

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. The Monkstown Park Anti-Bullying Policy reflects the characteristic spirit of the school and the school's Mission Statement which aims to:

"To provide a Catholic Education for all pupils in a caring Christian atmosphere in the pursuit of all round character development and academic excellence".

The Board is 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
 - 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
 - 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
- use of established intervention strategies
- 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
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying; racist bullying; bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community; 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 Discipline. 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.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying within Monkstown Park Junior School are as follows:

- Class Teacher
- Principal

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. Relevant staff will, where possible, be informed. All reports must be recorded and a copy provided to the Principal.

(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behavior 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, non-judgemental 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. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

(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 non-judgemental manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-judgemental 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.

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(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. 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;

If there is serious incident for example repeated name-calling or irritating and repeated 'nudging' the matter should be reported to the relevant Class teacher and Principal thereafter, Parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied.

Some sanctions may include:

A verbal/written apology

A contract of good behavior drawn up between the class teacher, pupil and Principal if necessary.

A Daily Report Sheet.

Detention after school.

Withdrawal of various privileges during the school week

Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate eg. A period of time at home for reflection on the behavior displayed and home discussion.

Suspension

Expulsion

Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Principal should be informed immediately. The Chairman of the Board of Management will be informed, if deemed necessary by the Principal and immediate action will be taken.

In order to appeal a decision, a parent may request a review by writing to the Principal who should then bring it to the attention of the Chairman of the Board of Management.

In the case of a complaint /allegation regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

Where cases, relating to either student or Staff member, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Chairman of the Board of Management.

(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 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.

(xix) In cases where the relevant teacher and/or Principal 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/Principal in the bullying incident report form.

(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, in writing to the school's Board of Management and follow the complaints procedure.

(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.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Promotion and reinforcement of the Anti-Bullying across the whole school, in every classroom with the teacher and Principal present at the start of each new school term.
- Specific 'Anti-Bullying' Awareness Weeks will be scheduled into the School Calendar.

- SPHE classes will deal with the issue of Bullying explicitly, however, the theme of bullying may arise across the curriculum

- The use of role-play, circle time, various poster-displays created by each class, anti-bullying charters/class contracts to be explored with the class teacher.

- Parents have a primary role in influencing their child’s social behaviour and responses.

- Pupils are advised in class on online best-practice and given with strategies and ways to deal with negative and/or personalised online comments etc.

- Proper supervision of pupils will take place at all times and in all school scenarios-

- The Principal may source guest speakers for key topics in the following areas:
 - o Friendships

 - o Relationships and Sexuality

 - o Identity and Self-Esteem

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 reflect that all members of staff, have a duty to report and not ignore any incident, which constitutes bullying or potentially bullying behaviour.

6.1 In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the in-

cident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the Designated Liaison Person must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

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

6.1.2 The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

7.2 In very difficult cases e.g. complete denial of involvement, the school Board of Management may be involved and sanctions for bullying will be imposed as specified in the School Disciplinary Code and the Suspension and Expulsion Policy.

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, published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Tusla inspector if requested.

11. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

Ongoing Evaluation of the anti-bullying policy:

- This anti bullying policy will be subject to continuous review in light of various incidents of bullying behavior encountered. The school will provide periodic examination of the prevention strategies in place.
- The bullying incident report form for recording and reporting of bullying to the school Principal will be a valuable and readily accessible source of information to any bullying behavior in the school. These forms will be reviewed annually to identify any specific issues that require attention. Any necessary changes made will be drawn up and implemented.