



Document name	RETNS Anti-Bullying Policy
Version reference	v2.0
Nature of revision	Review
Document owner	Board of Management
Ratified by	Board of Management
Date	13th December 2021
Review Date	2024

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour Guidelines issued by the NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board), the Board of Management of Rathfarnham Educate Together National 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.

The Board of Management (BOM) recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of children and their families. We do not tolerate bullying of any kind. We are therefore fully committed to implementing best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour. We note that good leadership, a shared understanding of all types of bullying, and a school-wide approach to preventing and addressing bullying, are essential components of an effective anti-bullying strategy. We strive for a positive school culture, based on Educate Together principles and core values, and an environment that is never threatening in any way. We actively welcome diversity and promote respectful relationships across our school community. We implement a range of education and prevention strategies to build empathy, respect and resilience in children. We ensure that children are supervised at all times and encourage them to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour if they witness or experience them. We use established intervention strategies and ensure the consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of any bullying behaviour. We monitor the effectiveness of our policy on an ongoing basis.

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 (‘the Acts’) prohibit discrimination on the nine grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. This Anti-bullying Policy is underpinned by respect and equality for all members of the school community. Respect and equality are reflected through the school ethos, in the classroom, in the delivery of the curriculum and through the school climate. 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 children or staff or the harassment of children or staff on any of the nine grounds specified above.

This policy addresses bullying between children only, and must be understood in the broader context of our Code of Behaviour. Any issues relating to the potential for bullying between other members of the school community are addressed in other school policies.

1 Key Principles of the Anti-Bullying Policy

The Board of Management of RETNS recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact it can have on the lives of children and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
 - encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents that may constitute bullying behavior in a non-threatening environment
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- Effective leadership
- A school-wide approach
- A shared understanding of bullying and its impact
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that:
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in children
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Effective supervision and monitoring of children
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of alleged bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

2 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 a group against another person or persons and which is repeated over time’.

The following types of behavior are included in the definition of bullying:

- **Physical aggression**, including unwanted physical contact
- **Intimidation**, for example using the voice as a weapon or using menacing body language/facial expressions
 - **Relational bullying**, including deliberate isolation/exclusion and malicious gossip
 - **Cyber-bullying**, which is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as phone, text, social networking sites, email, instant messaging, apps, gaming sites, chat rooms and other online means
- **Persistent name-calling** which hurts, insults or humiliates
- **Interference with/damage to personal property**
- **Extortion**, including demands for money or forcing theft to be carried out, likely accompanied by threats
- **Identity-based bullying** such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on gender, family status or religion, bullying based on a person’s membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or additional educational needs.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying, including isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, will be dealt with in accordance with the

school's Code of Behaviour.

Specifically in the context of cyber-bullying, a once-off offensive or hurtful text, email or other private message, does not fall within the definition of bullying. As such, it will be dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. However, 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.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Board of Management

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that this document is kept up to date and that the policy is upheld. The Board of Management seeks to ensure that staff members are able to avail of training and development opportunities for dealing effectively with bullying issues that they might come across during the course of their work.

3.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that these procedures for preventing, challenging and responding to bullying are implemented. The Deputy Principal will assume her duties in her absence. As leaders in the school community, they are in a strong position to influence attitudes and set standards in relation to bullying behaviour. The Principal has a particular role in making sure that all staff members are familiar with the anti-bullying policy and how this policy is implemented in practice in the school.

At every Board of Management meeting, the Principal will provide a report setting out:

- The overall number of bullying cases reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the Board. If a case of bullying was established, the bullying recording template in Appendix 1 will be used.
- Confirmation that the case(s) have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

3.3 All staff

Staff must always act as good role models and must never misuse the authority that they have. Children should be able to feel that they can go to any member of the staff about any issue relating to bullying. The member of staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with any alleged incidents of bullying (the 'Relevant Teacher') will ordinarily be the child's class teacher, but this role may be assumed by support teachers or the Principal in certain cases.

All staff are expected to be familiar with the anti-bullying policy and to report any incidents of bullying or potential bullying behaviour to the Relevant Teacher.

3.4 Parents and Guardians

We recognise that parents and guardians can play a vital role in terms of modelling anti-bullying behaviour and ensuring that their children are equipped with key life skills. We offer parents and guardians opportunities to be involved in policy development around bullying and also in practical initiatives that prevent bullying from taking place. We ask parents and guardians to be vigilant about any possible bullying that may be occurring and to understand that this may be happening outside of

school (any behaviour outside of school that impacts on school life can become a school issue). They are requested to report any such suspicions to the Principal, regardless of whether their own child is involved. If their child is suspected of engaging in bullying behaviour, parents and guardians are requested to cooperate fully with any investigation, so that the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible in the best interests of all concerned. Furthermore, we believe that the Parents' Association is well placed to organise general talks on preventing and dealing with bullying and we will aim to support them in doing this if they so choose.

3.5 Children in RETNS

Children were consulted in the drawing up of this policy Children may not bully another child. If children feel that they are being bullied, they should tell an adult that they trust about it. The allegation will be investigated and, if bullying is deemed to have taken place, action will be taken to stop the bullying from happening. If children witness or become aware of someone else being bullied, they must also tell a trusted adult about it. If children feel able to, they are encouraged to let those who are engaging in bullying behaviour know that this is not acceptable.

4 A Whole School Approach to the Prevention of Bullying

We accept that eliminating bullying behaviour in its entirety is a challenging and complex task. The school environment is only one of a range of environments in which children find themselves. The interplay between these environments is complex and we acknowledge that there is scope for bullying to occur. However, we will always endeavour to prevent bullying.

We use a range of strategies to teach children about bullying and to prevent bullying:

- Children are supervised at all times and behaviour amongst and between children is monitored closely
- We emphasise positive behaviour and adopt a restorative approach, as described in detail in our Code of Behaviour
- We display key messages focusing on our school values in classrooms and around the school
- Children work with their teachers to develop Class charters/ Yard rules
- We consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school
- The Learn Together programme, taught in all classes, promotes the values of justice, equality and human rights and helps children realise that bullying behaviour is morally wrong
- We deliver an anti-bullying module each year as part of our SPHE programme
- We have weekly assemblies where positive behaviour is promoted and respectful, positive behaviour is recognised through the Achievements Book
- A team of children from senior classes help to build positive relationships within the school in order to create an atmosphere in which bullying is unacceptable
- The Student Council promote positive respectful behaviour in the school
- We include lessons on cyber-bullying as part of our work on Safer Internet Use, explicitly teaching children about the appropriate use of social media
- We expect children to comply with the school expectations on mobile phone and internet use
- We undertake a range of awareness-raising exercises with all classes, proactively explaining the nature, variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying
- We help children to examine the issue of bullying in a calm, rational way, outside of the context of particular bullying incidents. We encourage them to recognise, reject and respond appropriately including reporting bullying behaviour
- We discuss bullying prevention on a regular basis as part of staff meetings, including the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied and the action to be taken if these signs are observed

- We inform parents and guardians on a regular basis about the initiatives that we have put in place to combat bullying. We ask for their vigilance about signs of bullying and request that they support the school in its anti-bullying work. We actively involve parents/guardians and the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- We are proactive in working with external agencies and external service providers to manage the issue of bullying as effectively as we can (for example, the National Educational Psychological Service).

5 Responding to an Allegation of Bullying

5.1 Investigating and Dealing with an Allegation of Bullying

If an allegation of bullying is made, we intervene as early as possible to put a stop to the behaviour, using the following approach:

- The Relevant Teacher, generally the class teacher, investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour that impacts on school life, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and putting in place an action plan involving all relevant parties (children, parents/guardians and staff) to resolve the situation. We will take a restorative approach in line with our school's Code of Behaviour
- The school, through the Relevant Teacher, reserves the right to ask a child to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This does not necessarily imply that a child is guilty of bullying
- The Relevant Teacher should inform the Principal (or Deputy Principal in her absence) that this step is being taken, so that she can assist and support the Relevant Teacher if necessary
- If it is concluded that bullying behaviour has occurred, the children are asked to make a commitment that they will treat all children fairly, equally and respectfully, including the targeted children
- The Relevant Teacher emphasises setting things right and repairing the relationship rather than apportioning blame. Children will be encouraged to take ownership of their actions and commit to stopping any negative behaviour. The emphasis will be on positive strategies for future behaviour and restorative practices (e.g. write a reflective journal/a verbal or written apology) rather than blame
- It may be useful at this stage to bring together all the children involved in the situation for a restorative meeting in order to fully resolve the process and enable them to move forward. This would be subject to the agreement of all involved
- Parents and guardians are kept informed of the process
- If it is concluded that bullying has taken place, the Relevant Teacher records the bullying behaviour using the standardised recording template at Appendix 1 and a copy is provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal
- If it is concluded that bullying has not taken place, the teacher keeps a record of the incident on the template for recording behaviours of concern (Appendix 2)
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the child's class folder.

5.2 Dealing with repeated or very serious bullying behaviour

It is possible that the early intervention procedure described above may not stop the bullying behaviour, or that the initial bullying is so serious that the above procedure is not appropriate. If a child commits to stop bullying, but then chooses to break that commitment and continue the bullying behaviour, further action will be necessary. This is regarded as a grave matter requiring the imposition of any of the sanctions below and will involve the Principal and/or the Deputy Principal:

- The school may contact the pupil's parents or guardians with a view to agreeing a strategy

whereby a commitment to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured (this may, for example, involve signing a formal behaviour agreement, countersigned by a parent or guardian)

- Other strategies outlined in the Code of Behaviour may also be employed (e.g. temporary loss of privileges/ temporary separation from peers/ a verbal or written apology/ a behavior contract)
- The school's suspension procedure may be enacted (see Code of Behaviour)
- The school's expulsion procedure may be enacted (Code of Behaviour).

6 Managing the aftermath of bullying

We recognise that all children who have been affected by bullying behaviour require subsequent support. The approach we adopt is one of setting things right and then devising strategies to promote positive behaviour in the future.

6.1 Children who are bullied

Taking immediate steps to resolve bullying situations is our priority. We will ensure that children who are bullied are treated with empathy throughout the process. After the situation has been resolved children may benefit from completing a written account. If necessary, we will encourage parents/guardians to ensure their children access adequate and timely counselling support. We will also help the children to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills. Furthermore, we will endeavour to ensure that our school ethos is fully implemented in all situations and, in particular, we will ensure all children are reminded that bullying is not the fault of the targeted child(ren).

6.2 Children who bully

We will make it clear that children who bully but reform are doing the right thing. The emphasis will be on restorative practices and making a fresh start, balanced with acknowledging the rights of children who have been bullied.

We will help children who bully to enhance their feelings of self-worth when necessary using a range of learning strategies; this may also include raising their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills. If necessary, we will encourage parents/guardians to ensure their children access adequate counselling to help them to learn to meet their needs in positive, constructive ways that acknowledge the rights of all in the school community.

7. Related documentation

- Anti- Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES,2013) - <https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/anti-bullying-procedures-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools.pdf>
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for School (NEWB,2008) - https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf
- Learn Together Curriculum https://learning.educatetogether.ie/pluginfile.php/25339/mod_resource/content/1/Learn%20Together.pdf
- Restorative Classroom Practice by Belinda Hopkins <https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Restorative-Classroom-Practice-Belinda-Hopkins.pdf>
- Restorative Practice (PDST) <https://pdst.ie/primary/healthwellbeing/restorativepractice>

This policy relates to, and should be read in conjunction with, other school policies including:

- Code of Behaviour
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- SPHE/RSE Policy
- RETNS Dress Code
- AEN Policy (Under review)

8. Contact Details

Queries about this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance:

The Principal
Rathfarnham Educate Together National School
Loreto Avenue
Rathfarnham
Dublin 14
Telephone: (01) 493 8677
E-mail: info@retns.ie

9. Review

The implementation of these procedures will be monitored on an ongoing basis. The policy will undergo an annual review by the board of management. Written notification that the review has been completed must be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the annual review and its outcome is sent to the patron and is made available, if requested, to the Department. A standardised notification, which must be used for this purpose, is included at Appendix 3.

If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2024.

Signed by Principal



Signed by Chairperson



Date: 13th December 2021

Date: 13th December 2021

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name and class of child being bullied

Name _____ Class _____

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

3. Who reported bullying concern? (tick relevant box(es))

Child concerned	
Other Child	
Parent / guardian	
Teacher	
ANA	
Other:	

4. Where did incidents happen? (tick relevant box(es))

Playground	
Classroom	
Online	
Other:	

5. Type of Bullying Behaviour

E.g. Physical Aggression, Cyber-bullying, Isolation/Exclusion, Name Calling, Intimidation, Damage to Property, Malicious Gossip, Other (specify)

6. Is behaviour regarded as identity-based bullying? Yes / No

If yes, indicate the relevant category

E.g. homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on gender, family status or religion, bullying based on membership of the Travelling Community, bullying of those with disabilities or additional educational needs

7. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 2
Template for recording behaviours of concern

1. Name(s) and class(es) of children engaged in incident

2. Who reported concern? (tick relevant box(es))

3. Where did incidents happen? (tick relevant box(es))

Child(ren) concerned	
Other Child	
Parent / guardian	
Teacher	
ANA	
Other:	

Playground	
Classroom	
Online	
Other:	

4. Brief Description of incident and its impact

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5. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Teacher) Date _____

Appendix 3

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.

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?	YES/NO
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Appendix 4

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

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

- o The Board of Management’s annual review of the school’s anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- o This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department’s Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____