

Anti-Bullying Policy

Belmayne Educate Together
2020



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This policy has been formulated by Belmayne ETNS to assist staff, pupils, parents and the school community in making an informed decision in relation to anti-bullying and to comply with legislation and Department of Education and Skills circulars.

This document has been reviewed during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020) to ensure that our policies reflect procedural and societal changes during this period.

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB (Tusla), the Board of Management of Belmayne Educate Together National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour, in cooperation with both teaching and non-teaching school staff under the leadership of the Principal and in consultation with parents and pupils. 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 Main Aims of an Anti-Bullying Policy

- (i) To create a positive school culture and climate that is inclusive and welcoming of difference;
- (ii) To raise awareness amongst the entire school community (including school management, teachers, pupils, parents, volunteers etc.) that bullying is unacceptable behaviour;
- (iii) To provide procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour;
- (iv) To provide procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour;
- (v) To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour;

Principles of Best Practice in Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour:

The Board of Management of Belmayne ETNS 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 and sexually inappropriate behaviour, particularly before “hot time” (school trips) Teachers to teach specific lessons and to go over the code of behaviour (school behaviour contract) prior to school trips (hot times)..
- ✓ 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.

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 (more information in Appendix 1) 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 Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. (Appendix 2)

Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Belmayne ETNS believes that a consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice.

The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying in Belmayne Educate Together National School is **the class teacher**. (Section 6.8.3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- (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 on Aladdin which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

Overview of Bullying Investigation Procedure

The Procedure for investigating and dealing with Bullying has been developed in Belmayne ETNS in conjunction with staff, parents and pupils. This procedure reflects best practice.

1. All incidents/reports of bullying must be investigated by the class teacher using the various templates provided with this policy. (See templates taken from “Break Through the Cloud of Bullying”, Appendices 3, 4, 5 & 6)
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed through e-mail, meeting.
3. Class teachers must record the results of the investigations on Aladdin on the files of the children concerned.
4. If it becomes apparent that bullying is occurring, the parents of the children concerned are called and a meeting is arranged with the Parents, Class teacher, children and Principal and/or Deputy Principal. During the Covid 19 pandemic, most of these meetings will now occur via Zoom to ensure that social distancing protocols are maintained. In certain circumstances it might be deemed necessary to meet in the hall and observe social distancing measures with good ventilation.
5. The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils. Parents will be given a copy of the child’s behavior sheet and asked to discuss the incident with their child and sign it. This behaviour sheet will be sent via email at this time.
6. The Code of Behaviour is implemented including sanctions such as suspension.

Follow Up

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the investigating teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- a) Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- b) Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- c) Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- d) Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

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.

Procedure When Investigating Possible Cases of Bullying

In all cases, teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

Initial Steps in Resolving Possible Bullying Behaviour

- If an incident has taken place that might involve bullying or develop into bullying behaviour, the class teacher with support from his/her SET teacher will establish a Restorative Circle to discuss the incident. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Restorative circle will be amended and adjusted to ensure 1 metre social distancing is observed during circle time and to maintain the integrity of the pod/bubble.
- Restorative Circles will be introduced in all classes from 2nd to 6th in the second and third term of the 2019/20 school year.
- Restorative Circles will form a regular part of school life, taking place once a week and will allow all pupils to discuss and resolve issues they are having in school. This process will be supported by the class teacher and/or SET teacher and will be pupil led. See Appendix 7.
- When analysing possible incidents of bullying behaviour through the restorative process, the class teacher/SET may seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- The class teacher/SET will support the pupils in expressing their concerns and support the pupils in finding a solution to the problem.
- All restorative discussions are conducted **with sensitivity to all parties concerned**. This ensures due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- Short hand written notes in the class teacher's 'restorative book' will be kept at this stage and referred back to in the next restorative circle to determine if the agreed upon solution has been successful.

If the Initial Restorative Process was Unsuccessful

(after a maximum of 3 restorative sessions or no more than 20 days)

- To gather further information about the incident(s) and to determine who to speak to, teachers will use the Class Survey, found in Appendix 5. "Info for Teachers" will be read by the teacher before carrying out the survey (See Appendix 3 "Break through the Cloud of Bullying").
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually following the class survey, using the Bullying Interview Scripts found in Appendix 4. The alleged pupil(s) directly responsible for any bullying behaviour will be interviewed using the script found in Appendix 6. Pupils may also be asked to draw their account of the incident if necessary.
- Thereafter, all those involved will be **met as a group**. At the restorative group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened, to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements; This can only occur if guidelines for safety standards have been met for COVID-19.
- Each member of a group will be supported through the **possible pressures** that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- A full report will be completed by the class teacher and The Principal/Deputy Principal will be informed by e-mail or meeting. This report must be saved on Aladdin under the profiles of any and all pupils who have engaged in the bullying behaviour.

Investigation Concludes that Bullying Behaviour is Occurring

- A meeting will be arranged between the parents of the pupils who are directly involved. Due to protocols in place preventing external visitors from accessing the school campus, in line with health and safety protocols, this meeting will take place via Zoom or other teleconferencing platform.
- In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour, the pupil will be asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s). (See pupil promise form in Anti Bullying Folder – Appendix 8.)
- Blame will not be apportioned but bullying behaviour will be treated as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. The class teacher emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake.' In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will again be informed of the continuing bullying behaviour. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour will be regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school (see sanctions in the Code of Behaviour).

- A further restorative meeting may take place with all involved to start the healing process.
- Class teachers must record the results of the investigations on Aladdin on the files of the children concerned.

Additional Information

- All incidents/reports (including anonymous reports) of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the child's class teacher. A pupil or parent might bring concerns of bullying to any staff member in school but responsibility for investigating must be taken over by the class teacher.
- The primary aim for the class teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to help the pupils resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- In investigating and dealing with bullying through the restorative process, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and will support the pupils in finding a resolution.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher through the restorative process. 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;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are obligated to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant class teacher;
- 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;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

Determining Whether a Bullying Case has been adequately and Appropriately Addressed

(The investigating 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;
- 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;

- 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.

Procedures for the Recording of Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management must ensure that Belmayne ETNS has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour. All records are maintained in accordance with GDPR.

The investigating teacher must record all reports of confirmed bullying on Aladdin. If it is established by the investigating teacher that bullying has occurred, the investigating teacher must keep appropriate written records on Aladdin which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

Circumstances whereby Bullying Behaviour must be recorded using the Bullying Record Templates (Appendices 4 – 6) and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal are:

- Where the initial restorative process has failed to achieve the desired results after three sessions or after 20 school days, whichever comes first.
- 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.
- 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.
- Placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement in public view where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.
- Physical aggression causing injury to someone that requires medical attention.
- In cases whereby the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service will be sought.
- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and Child Protection Procedures for Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate. As all teachers are mandated and bullying is considered as a form of abuse, cases may be referred on to Tusla for further investigation.

Implementation of Education and Prevention Strategies, Including Awareness Raising

Belmayne ETNS aims to foster a positive and inclusive school culture in our community. Belmayne ETNS promotes respect, a sense of community and at the same time celebrates differences and diversity.

Attention is given to the whole population through school-wide prevention practices. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by Belmayne Educate Together National School are as follows (but not limited to):

School Wide Prevention Practices Include:

- Circle Time, including Restorative Practices.
- School assemblies based on rules, manners, friendship, etc.: School assemblies will be scheduled remotely nearer to the October Midterm 2020. Video technology like Zoom or pre-recorded assemblies may be broadcast to the school community during the academic year 2020/2021.
- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times and using good manners.
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Consistently tackling 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.
- Explicitly teaching pupils about the appropriate use of social media during Social Media Awareness Week.
- Positively encouraging pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Actively involving parents and/or the Parents' Council in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Internet Safety Programme for children and parents, including social media awareness.
- On occasion, the school will hold Anti Bullying Workshops for parents.
- Highlighting and explicitly teaching school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas (Golden Rules-Jenny Mosely).
- All staff actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
 - a) Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - b) 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.
- Supporting the establishment and work of the Student Council.
- Organisation of various themed weeks such as but not limited to: Mind Your Manners Month, Anti-Bullying Week, Human Rights Month, Children's Rights Week, Friendship Week.
- Stay Safe Programme is taught in every class [see school's SPHE Policy].
- Identity based bullying is explicitly dealt with and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Our SPHE and Learn Together Curriculums encourage respect for diversity and the dignity of each person.
 - The Learn Together School Library contains books for various age groups with diverse characters from in terms of gender roles and family types.
- Through curriculum areas, especially SPHE and Learn Together and extra-curricular

- programmes, pupils are given opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- Staff Meetings on Anti-Bullying - Information, Training, Policies and Procedures review and implementation.
 - Good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place in Belmayne ETNS both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour. Supervision arrangements are reviewed regularly at staff meetings to ensure this continues.

Supporting pupils affected by bullying behaviour

- Class teachers will implement lessons and programmes which will encourage pupils to participate in activities to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendships and social skills, and thereby build their resilience. An example of this includes the Weaving Wellbeing programme.
- Mentoring may be provided for the child or children who were/are affected by bullying behaviour. Alan Oates, the school's mentor, is a qualified psychotherapist and offers support to many pupils in school.
- Pupils involved in or affected by bullying behaviour may be assisted by the school's SET teachers.
- Various themed weeks are organised during the year that cover topics such as anti-bullying, friendship, cyber safety etc.
- Restorative Circles are being introduced to all classes from 2nd to 6th and will encourage pupils to clearly express their feelings and to work with their peers to agree on problem solving and possible solutions to problems.
- The school's management team, HSCL, SET teachers, SNAs and class teachers constantly engage with each other to identify, implement and monitor supports for children with various needs, including those affected by bullying behaviours.
- The school's HSCL regularly provides courses and support to parents that may help them support their children.

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.

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.

Implementation

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 17th August 2020.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Useful Information and Contacts

Service	Website	Contact Details
Barnados	www.barnados.ie	01-453 0355
Tusla – Child & Family Agency	www.tusla.ie	01-771 8500
Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC)	www.dcu.ie/abc	
Childline	www.childline.ie	1800 666 666
ISPCC	www.ispcc.ie	01-676 7960
National Association for Victims of Bullying		0506 31590
Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	www.irish-counselling.ie	01-230 3536
National Parents Council - Primary	www.npc.ie	01-887 4477
Parentline	www.parentline.ie	1890 927 277
Stay Safe	www.staysafe.ie	
Bully 4 U	www.bully4u.ie	

Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent Council. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Checklist for Annual Review of Bullying Policy (Completed August 2020)

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?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the Parent Council?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school 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 been initiated or completed?	
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?	

Notification Regarding the Board of Management's Annual Review of the Anti-Bullying Policy

To: Parents and Guardians of Belmayne ETNS

The Board of Management of Belmayne Educate Together N.S. 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 on the 17th of August 2020.
- The 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: Carol Norton **Date:** 17th August 2020

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: Sinead O'Meara **Date:** 17th August 2020

(Principal)

Date of Next Review: September 2021