

Limerick Educate Together School

Anti-Bullying Policy

1: Adoption

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 Limerick Educate Together School

(LETS) 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 and Department of Education and Skills Circular 0045/2013 which were published in September 2013.

2: Key Principles

The Board of Management of LETS 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
 - 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
 - address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including 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)**
- **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 behavior are included in the definition of bullying

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- bullying based on another's religious/ spiritual beliefs or lack of religious belief
- cyber-bullying, eg. abusive or inappropriate and unsolicited telephone calls, text messages or similar contact through social media
- 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
- physical aggression
- intimidation
- name calling
- damage to or threat of damage to property
- repeated targeted criticism of an individual
- extortion

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

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 code of behavior of LETS

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 LETS Code of Behaviour.

4: Role of school personnel

Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) recommends that the relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in Primary Schools is/are the class teacher(s).

In the case where children from two different classes are involved, both class teachers will be deemed to be the relevant teachers. In such a case a local agreement can be made between the two relevant teachers that one of them take on the case, or they can work together on this.

5. Role of Parents / Guardians

Parents/guardians who have reason to believe that their child has been the victim of unwanted negative behavior should in the first instance contact the class teacher. This can be done by way of a note in the child's homework journal or a phone call to the school. As confidentiality is important in relation to these matters it is recommended that a meeting between the teacher and parent/s take place when there are no other children present.

6. Education and prevention Strategies

The Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

(Key Principles of Best Practice, 6.1 Positive school culture and climate, 6.1.1 & 6.1.2) state:

“A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. A school policy on bullying is most effective when supported by a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.

Central to a positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).”

It is with this in mind that 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 in LETS are as follows:

- from school year 2015/16 Anti Bullying logos/mottos designed by the children will be prominently displayed in the school. Devising a school anti-bullying charter, slogan or rhyme for display in classrooms and other prominent locations
- children will be made aware of what to do if they feel they are being bullied, or if they see another child being bullied. The role of the **bystander** will be specifically explained to all children.
- circle time discussions on bullying in each class
- the SPHE curriculum which “incorporates the “Stay Safe Programme”, the “Walk Tall Programme” and the “ Relationships and Sexuality Programme” will be taught across the whole school to support the anti-bullying policy.
- anti-cyberbullying lessons will be taught to second to sixth classes annually
- annual awareness campaigns - in conjunction with staff, pupils, parents & BOM
- friendship week. This will be held during the Spring term of each year. It encourages positive behaviour across the school. This involves a cross-curricular approach to the theme of friendship and is a whole school initiative
- student Council. The Student Council supported by Mike will implement buddy/friendship systems in Junior yard, details below
- support systems for yard times from September March 2015
 - Junior yard: Lunch Pals Rota
 - Friendship Stop/ bench for junior yard: when a student standing at the stop, other children will offer to play with them
- staff will be given an Anti-Bullying pack with policy documents & DES Guidelines
- in LETS we operate a whole school approach to all behaviour management including bullying
- the Parents Association will contact the National Parents Council to organize anti-bullying training for the parent body
- we will ensure that there is adequate school yard supervision
- we will employ systems of encouragement “ catching being good” and rewards to promote desired behavior and compliance with the school rules as outlined in the Code of Behaviour of LETS. Examples that may be employed include:
 - Golden time
 - Golden book
 - Homework vouchers
 - Student of the week/ line of the week
 - Class Dojo
- we will use strategies such as the worry or niggle box to encourage children to communicate any worries that they may have with staff

We recognise that this list is not exhaustive. All anti-bullying education and prevention strategies used during the school year will be included in the annual report as required by legislation.

7. Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of alleged bullying behaviour and established Intervention strategies.

In LETS we note that some children engage in low-level negative behaviours towards others. These behaviours may be the same as behaviours which can be deemed as bullying, but do not always fall under the definition of bullying e.g. a child may laugh at another child, this may be hurtful but a one off experience, or it can be part on an on-going pattern of behaviour that may amount to bullying.

Teachers monitor these behaviours as part of their responsibilities. In LETS staff are encouraged to keep a note of behaviours if and when they see a pattern emerging and to alert other staff via Aladdin. However minor or once-off occurrences of negative behaviour may not be recorded and can generally be dealt with informally using our Code of behavior.

However the school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of alleged bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of alleged bullying behaviour are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

- initial verbal report from child and or parent/staff member to designated teacher
- should any member of staff witness possible bullying behaviour s/he should tell the perpetrator to stop immediately and shall make the relevant class teacher aware of the incident
- on receipt of a report the relevant teacher will take a three step approach to dealing with the allegation of bullying

Step 1 - The relevant teacher speaks to individuals concerned to establish chain of events and whether bullying has occurred. (See Section 6.8.9 of *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* for detailed steps on how to conduct an investigation). In the case of suspected bullying the relevant teacher will keep written records of the case on Aladdin and the Yard Incident Book, depending on the origin of the incident of bullying. The Principal should be informed of any incidents at this stage. Details of the steps to be taken by the relevant teacher are contained in **Appendix 1**.

Step 2 -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 practical the relationships of the parties involved. The teacher will establish a plan of action on how to resolve the issues within the next 20 school days. This period of time gives the child who has been engaging in bullying behaviour the opportunity to change his/her behaviour. The steps to be followed for step 2 can be found in **Appendix 2**. Records are stored on Aladdin under Behaviour Reports.

Step 3 - In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately resolved by the children 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 from the Anti-bullying guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools. A copy of this is available in **Appendix 3**. The relevant teacher and Principal should both keep copies of the form in a secure location. When the 20 school day period has elapsed the relevant teacher will determine whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed. In doing so the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- o whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- o whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
- o whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable

Intervention Strategies

- If it is deemed necessary that sanctions be implemented, the relevant teacher shall refer to the school's Code of Behaviour.

- a behaviour plan is implemented for the child who has been deemed to be bullying. The aim of this is to reward positive behaviour and to encourage the child to make positive choices in his/her behaviour towards other children. A trusted adult can act as a mentor to encourage positive behaviour in this child in the future
- 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 incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”
- 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

8. Programme of Support

The school’s **programme of support** for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

This policy draws on the expertise in the DES Action Plan on Bullying 2013 & The Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College Dublin.

It is recognised in our school that bullying affects the victim, the person who is doing the bullying and the person who witnesses bullying.

Support for the child who has been bullied

- support in the form of a trusted adult to speak to daily is offered to the child who has been bullied for as long as this is deemed necessary

- self-esteem building exercises and opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth will be undertaken with the child who has been bullied in order to restore their self-esteem
- where appropriate or necessary friendship groups or a buddy system will be implemented for the child for yard times
- if it is deemed appropriate the child will be offered concrete support in how to deal with a similar situation in the future i.e. given the language tools to react and seek help immediately. For example: this can be practised using role play/ drama/social stories. This is particularly useful for children with Special Educational Needs who may lack the necessary verbal and/or non-verbal skills to do so. The teacher, with the support of the SEN team will offer this support

Support for the child who has deemed to be engaging in bullying behaviour

- the child who has been engaging in bullying behaviour will be offered concrete support in changing her/his behaviour. This can involve self-esteem building exercises and opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth. This child may also be given the opportunity to speak to a trusted adult on a regular basis to encourage her/him to continue to make positive behaviour choices
- where deemed appropriate follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing both sides together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect

Support for the child who has witnessed bullying behaviour

- the child who has witnessed bullying behaviour will be offered concrete support if necessary, by being given the opportunity to speak to a trusted adult on a regular basis to help him/her process what s/he has witnessed
- children who make an initial report on what is later deemed to be bullying behaviour will be praised. The importance of the bystander will be highlighted

9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on date 14.01.16

11. 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 Patron if requested.

12. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Date	13.12.16
Chairperson	Jane Harris
Principal	Michael Quealy
Next Review	Dec 2017

Appendix 1

Step 1: For the Relevant Teacher in Dealing with/ Investigating Incidents of Bullying Behaviour

- in all incidences the teacher will exercise his/her best judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type it is and how best it might be resolved
- all reports of bullying must be investigated, that way pupils will gain confidence in telling. pupils who report bullying should be affirmed for acting responsibly
- all non-teaching staff are encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed or mentioned to them
- teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
- on being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour
- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
- when analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who and when This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a nonaggressive manner
- it may be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- 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 the other's statements
- 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

Appendix 2

Steps to be followed when it has been established that bullying has occurred

- where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have 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 perspective of the pupil being bullied
- the "Relevant Teacher" does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he 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. Staff will endeavor to use restorative type questions at this point. Examples of these questions are as follows:
 - What happened and what were you thinking at the time?
 - What have you thought about since?
 - Who has been affected by what you have done and how?
 - What can you do to make things right?
 - What was your part in the problem?
 - What can we do to make sure that this does not happen again?
 - How do you think the other person felt?

The above questions serve as a guide and their use will vary according to the context involved. More on this problem solving approach can be found in "The Restorative Practices Handbook: for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators"

- when an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- if a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake.' In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. 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 the pupil
- follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable
- repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school

Appendix 3:DES Template for recording bullying behavior

December 2016

