# Anti-bullying policy

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 Thomastown NS 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 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
* 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.

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.

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

**The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher.**

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 by the school are as follows:

* Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involving strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
* The School will, through both its curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth
* Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils’ awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, will deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying through the use of the SPHE programme
* Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyberbullying. This will be done by attempting to prevent it happening in the first place. This will focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The Webwise Programme will be covered from 1st to 6th classes. The school-wide approach and the role of parents will be emphasised also. The prevention and awareness raising measures will also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school. This will be done using the WATCHYOURSPACE.IE website as a resource in the classroom.
* There will also be a speaker brought in to talk to parents about how they can look out for, help, prevent and deal with bullying. Parents will also be directed towards the BULLY4U.IE website
* The school’s approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will endeavour to ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.
* The school’s prevention and awareness raising measures will be appropriate to the type of bullying and take into account the age and gender of the pupils involved. The school will work to raise the awareness of bullying so that all members of the school community understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour. This will be especially emphasised during a friendship week (ISPCC Tips)
* Teachers will use a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.
* The school will start a ‘Shield’ programme in association with the ISPCC Shield Campaign that promotes positive behaviour by ‘bystanders’ to help stop bullying behaviour.
* All school personnel will use the same phrase when they see possible bullying behaviour taking place. This phrase will be ‘Stop! That behaviour is wrong’
* Children will be taught the difference between reporting bullying and ‘telling tales’.

**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:**

* A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school’s anti-bullying policy.
* 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
* All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will 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 is to 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), caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant 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
* Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
* Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
* All interviews will 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
* When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will 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.
* If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first.
* Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the 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. 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
* In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The principal or deputy principal will also be informed at this stage. The school will 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
* Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school’s anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. 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
* Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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.

**The school will adopt a consistent and clear approach.**

**Reporting and when to use Appendix 3**

* In cases where the relevant teacher 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 in the standardised recording template (See Appendix)
* A copy of this report must be given to the Principal
* At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:
  + - The overall number of bullying cases reported to the Principal since the previous report to the Board
    - Confirmation that all cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school’s anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

**The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**

* Some pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Lessons within the schools SPHE programme will help. Information on where to get such counselling will be provided by the school to parents if deemed necessary and appropriate.
* A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is part of the school’s intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil’s self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Information on where do get such counselling will be provided by the school to parents.
* Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
* Pupils involved in confirmed incidences of bullying will be actively engaged with using social stories.

**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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents on request and provided to the Parents’ Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 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)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_