

## **Nicker N.S. Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **1. Introductory Statement**

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 Nicker 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 School's Anti-Bullying Policy is being renewed and updated in the light of these procedures.

### **2. Rationale – Why is an anti-bullying policy necessary?**

Bullying affects everyone, not just the perpetrators and the recipients, it also affects those other children who observe bullying behaviour and who can sometimes be drawn in by group pressure. Any pupil, through no fault of his or her own, may be bullied. No one person or group, whether staff, or pupil, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Nicker N.S. school believes that every pupil has the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. It is recognised that the potential for bullying to occur exists within all institutions. Good school organisation and an effective code of discipline, can minimise the occurrence of bullying. This school has a clear written policy which promotes good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is wrong, that it is a form of anti-social behaviour and that it will not be tolerated in the school. Pupils, parents/guardians are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

### **3. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are those strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying, homophobic or transphobic bullying, in accordance with Section 6.5 Anti -Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools**

#### **Principles of best practice in the prevention of bullying**

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: (See also, Appendix)

Nicker N.S. will maintain 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 nonthreatening environment;
- Promotes respectful relationships across the community
- Is enabled through effective leadership
- Is whole-school in its approach
- Is a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Implements educational and prevention strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- Explicitly addresses the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying, including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Ensures effective supervision and ongoing monitoring of pupils
- Provides support for staff
- Ensures consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- Promotes on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The following actions will be taken to help build and maintain a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Adopt a pro-active, problem-solving approach to all incidents of bullying, with the emphasis on ending bullying behaviour and restoring positive relations between children as far as practicable, in line with the principles of restorative practice.
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with disability or Special Educational Needs.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are ignored.

- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through of same is very important.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media and cyber bullying.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure that there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- Implement S.P.H.E. programmes such as Fun Friends, Friends for Life, Walk Tall and others which may be recommended, to teach the skills of friendship, positive interaction and constructive conflict resolution and prevent identity based bullying.
- Use appropriate materials and provide information to inform parents and children about the dangers of online bullying, e.g. Webwise.
- Explicitly teach pupils, parents and staff about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.

#### **4. Defining Bullying**

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

The Department of Education and Skills' *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (September, 2013) describes bullying as "unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated overtime" (p.39). They also state that bullying includes behaviours such as deliberate exclusion, nasty gossip, cyberbullying and bullying people because of their identity (who they are).

#### **4a. Bullying can take many forms.**

##### **(a) Physical Aggression**

A child can be physically punched, kicked, hit and spat at. It may include shoving, poking, tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. It can often be excused as horseplay, a game, or messing.

##### **(b) Verbal Aggression**

Verbal abuse can take the form of name-calling. Possibly personal or sexual in nature, it can be direct or through rumour spreading. It can also be directed at a child's race or religion. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, physical/social disability, sexual orientation or personality.

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates, **is** regarded as a form of bullying.

##### **(c) Gesture**

Non-verbal, threatening or intimidatory messages.

##### **(d) Exclusion**

Whereby a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some, or even the entire class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim by passing around notes about, or drawings of the victim, or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

A child can be bullied simply by being excluded from activities with those whom they believe to be their friends. This is a separate issue to a situation in which children may have had a mutual disagreement and where both children or groups have refused to speak to each other or apologise/accept an apology. The latter situation will be dealt with by coaching children in forming and maintaining friendships. However these situations will be carefully monitored in case they develop into bullying.

##### **(e) Extortion**

Demands for money, lunches or items of personal property may be made, often accompanied by threats in the event of not promptly "paying up."

#### **Slagging**

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to repeated personal remarks aimed at a particular individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene, or when it

involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family or remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation, it may be taken as bullying.

#### **(f) Bullying of School Personnel**

Bullying of school personnel by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, or threats to people's families .

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.

#### **4b The Effects of Bullying Prolonged bullying can cause serious effects to children's long term well being. It can take the form of:**

- Stress; reduced concentration, motivation and confidence.
- Anxiety about going to school.
- Sleeping problems, alcohol or substance abuse.
- Stomach problems, panic attacks and nervous breakdown, suicidal thoughts

**5a The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:** (in accordance with Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Class teacher, Principal, Ms. Karen Franklin, Deputy Principal, Ms. Siobhán English

It is recognised that all school staff play a vital role in preventing and dealing with bullying behavior.

Sometimes, due to the small group/individual setting, pupils may tell an SNA, Learning Support teacher or Resource teacher, in the first instance, if they are experiencing bullying. This will be followed up with the relevant class teacher or Principal.

All members of staff are made aware of the Anti-bullying policy, so as to be in a position to act appropriately. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

While the steps are seen as being followed in a particular order, it may be necessary to move quickly to later steps when dealing with more serious cases (based on the type of behaviour or multiple incidents). Also, if a pupil is deemed to be at risk of harm, at any stage, the staff should consult and be guided by the school's child protection policy and guidelines as outlined in Children First and the Child Guidance Act. At all times staff work to support the pupils who are affected by bullying.

**Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour** (in accordance with Section 6.8)

- (a) All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- (b) It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- (c) Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils, should be referred immediately by the class teacher to other members of staff.
- (d) Parents or guardians of recipients and pupils who bully, should be informed by the class teacher so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter with their child. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.

- (e) Parents/guardians must inform the class teacher or make enquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect, or incidents that have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.
- (f) Individual teachers in consultation with the appropriate staff member should record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's Discipline Policy and its Code of Behaviour.
- (g) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries and Special Needs Assistants, **are** encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher and principal.
- (h) In the case of a complaint by a parent regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal, at a later date.
- (i) Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved, a meeting should take place between the class teacher, principal and parents/guardian in an attempt to solve any difficulties or concerns
- (j) If the case is still unresolved, the matter should be referred to the School's Board of Management.

### **6a Warning Signs**

Unexplained cuts, bruising or damaged clothes.

Anxiety or mood swings/behaviour.

Loss of interest in school and deteriorating school performance.

Unusual classroom behaviour, erratic attendance or hanging back after classes.

Requests for more pocket money or stealing.

Damage to possessions.

Spontaneous out of character comments about either pupils or teachers.

Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied, however if repeated, or occurring in combination, it would be necessary to investigate what is affecting the pupil.

## **What can you do if you are being bullied?**

### **Child:**

- Take action. Tell someone you trust/adult/parent/teacher. Do not blame yourself.
- Watching and doing nothing looks as if you support bullying behaviour, making the child being bullied feel more unhappy and isolated.
- Tell an adult immediately. Teachers and staff have ways of dealing with bullying behaviour without getting you into trouble.
- Do not, actively, or passively support bullying behaviour.
- If you are scared to tell a teacher or an adult on your own, ask a friend to go with you.
- If the bullying has happened by text message or on the Internet do not delete the message without copying it or taking a screenshot/photo of it.

### **Parent:**

- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, how and with whom they have spent lunchtime.
- If you feel your child may be a recipient of bullying behaviour, please inform the school via your child's teacher immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- It is necessary for parents to speak with the class teacher as soon as they are aware of, or suspect bullying. Teachers and staff in the school will treat all cases with the utmost confidentiality.
- It is important that parents advise their child not to fight back physically. If a child is hit or struck by another child, that child needs to tell their teacher, or the teacher on the yard, immediately. At that stage the child engaged in bullying behaviour will be given a time-out for a period of time, in the hallway of their classroom. If the behaviour is more serious, the child will not be allowed to partake in the rest of games or playtime. If this behaviour continues the child will miss out on 'Golden Hour' activity.
- Tell your own son or daughter that it is not his or her fault that they are being bullied. Encourage your child to take part and not to further isolate themselves by not joining in with the group during playtime and also to be aware of their right to take part and feel safe in school.



Give them the words to say if someone excludes them, practise saying these words/phrases so that if the bullying behaviour takes place again, they feel more prepared/confident to confront the bully.

- Make sure your child is fully aware of the school policy concerning bullying. Please ensure that they are always reminded of the importance of telling and asking for help.
- If your child has been identified as displaying bullying behaviour, stay calm and don't panic. Try to find out the reasons why.

### **7a Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying**

Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional, problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour, reported by either pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. In any incident of bullying, the teacher should speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to the rights concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

- (a) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- (b) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually and then the group should be met together. Each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
- (c) If it is concluded 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 Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
- (d) Each member of the group should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by the teacher.
- (e) Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
- (f) In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, a meeting with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved will be arranged as appropriate. Teachers will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring to the school policy. Parents will be asked to discuss or suggest ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
- (g) If the incident involves the Internet or social media any relevant information or posts (text or photos) must be removed.

- (h) A follow-up meeting will be arranged by the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

### As a school:

- a) We will treat bullying as a serious offence and take every possible action to eradicate it from our school.
- b) We will organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying, e.g. provide increased supervision at problem times
- c) Use any opportunity to discuss aspects of bullying, and the appropriate way to behave towards each other, e.g. the RSE / Bí Folláin/Stay Safe programme, Fun Friends and Friends for Life Programmes which are all taught in the school
- d) Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.
- e) Review annually the school policy and its degree of success.
- f) Staff will not use teaching materials or equipment, or engage in discussions which might give a negative view of particular groups because of their ethnic origin, race or sex, or any other issue.
- g) All teachers will encourage pupils to discuss relationships with other people, and form positive attitudes towards others.
- h) Pupils will be encouraged to treat everyone with respect.
- i) Classroom rules will be regularly reviewed by the class teacher and class.
- J) All staff members will :
  - Support and encourage pupils to report bullying. Provide a discrete way for pupils to report bullying and encourage pupils who witness it to report.
  - Take bullying seriously and find out the facts when told about a possible incident of bullying. Gather information, talk to the pupils involved individually. Keep a written record of dates, incidents and steps taken.
  - Challenge bullying directly and follow the steps in the bullying policy.
  - Support children who are being bullied and help the bullies to change their behaviour.

- Inform parents (informally at first), ask for their suggestions and seek their support.
- If the bullying is about a particular issue (e.g. differences among pupils), initiate a discussion on the issue in class, but not focused on any particular child.
- Watch out for signs which may point to a child being bullied,.
- If necessary break up the group dynamics by assigning places. Most bullying groups have a leader with other children being frightened of not bullying. Turn peer pressure against bullying.

**From Department of Education and Skills *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (September, 2013)***

**The School's Programme of Support for those affected by bullying (in accordance with Section 6.8)**

Action to be taken when bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected the class teacher will talk to the suspected recipient, the suspected perpetrator and any witnesses. If any degree of bullying is identified, the following action will be taken:

Help and support will be given as is appropriate to both the perpetrators and the recipients:

We support **the recipients** in the following ways:

- a) by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, and/or principal
- b) by informing their parents/guardians.
- c) by offering continuing support when deemed necessary for the recipient.
- d) by taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent further bullying.

We will discipline, yet try to help the perpetrators in the following ways:

- a) by talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- b) informing their parents/guardians.
- c) by continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- d) by taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.
- e) by encouraging empathy and consideration for others at all times

## Disciplinary Steps

- a) The child engaged in bullying behavior will be warned to stop offending.
- b) Parents/guardians will be informed by telephone call to arrange a meeting with the class teacher
- c) Discussions will take place regarding the nature of the bullying and possible reasons for the bullying behaviour. Behavioural targets will be set and a review date will be arranged to consider how the behaviour has changed or if it has improved.
- d) The child engaged in bullying behaviour may be excluded from school activities at break and/or lunch times. e) He/she may also miss out on 'golden hour' activities.
- f) If the bullying behaviour does not stop, parents/guardians will be notified again and a second meeting will be held with parent(s), class teacher and principal.
- g) If the bullying continues the child engaged in this behaviour may be suspended for a minor fixed period (one or two days).
- h) If the bullying behaviour still persists, the child engaged in this behaviour will be recommended for suspension for a major fixed period or for an indefinite period.
- i) If bullying behavior still continues, the child will be requested to appear before the Board of Management of Nicker N.S with their parent(s)/guardians. This may result in the child concerned being expelled.

Each case of bullying behaviour is different and will be dealt with on its merits to ensure fairness to all involved.

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 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 are 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 advises the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **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.

### **10. 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.

**11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management** in 2011; revised in 2013 and also in 2014 by the Staff of Nicker NS. All parents were provided with a copy in Nov 2011 and informed through our newsletter that the policy had been revised in 2014 and in 2016. It has been revised in November 2021 and is currently being reviewed and revised in May 2023.

**12. 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 can be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

**13. 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 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 of Board of Management

Principal Date: Date of next review: June 2024