



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

ACHONRY NATIONAL SCHOOL

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide the best possible education for the students in our care.

We want all in our school community to develop and achieve their potential in a positive atmosphere of respect, effort and fairness.

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 Achonry N.S. 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 it also includes the new definition of bullying in line with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour*. This policy will be replaced by the *School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour* (During the academic year 2024-2025)

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:-

1. 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.
2. Effective leadership.
3. A school-wide approach.
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
5. 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.
6. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
7. Supports for staff;
8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition of Bullying:

In accordance with the **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying**, bullying is defined as follows:-

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour**

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing.

****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.

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

Outside School

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.

Fostering a positive culture in the school

- We foster a positive school spirit in our school. We practise positive language and acknowledge positive behaviour (Incredible Years). Children are asked to work on certain areas which may help to increase inclusivity and also awareness of the schools anti bullying policy. We acknowledge desired respectful behaviour in class, throughout the school and at all school activities/events. Parents are the first role models for good behaviour that children have. Parents should be expected to model the standards that students are asked to respect. We ask parents to be aware of our policies and encourage children to be

respectful and inclusive in their dealing with others.

- We actively seek parental support for anti-bullying measures/procedures through our communication with Parents Association and talks with parents during Parent Teacher meetings
- The ways in which parents and teachers interact will provide students with a model of good relationships. Appointments with teachers should be made through the school secretary. Meetings with teachers during class time would only happen in exceptional circumstances and where other supervision is available
- We encourage the use of respectful and appropriate language both in the classroom and during school activities.
- Class teachers teach class and school rules and at the beginning of each school year.
- We recognise that we are living in a digital community. We all need to be aware of the dangers of inappropriate usage of phones and ICT. With that in mind all social media sites are blocked in the school (Filtering System) and mobile phones or any other recording devices are not allowed in the school (with the exception of staff and other approved usage -* see AUP) It is the responsibility of parents to monitor their children's use of technology and we strongly recommend this. To assist parents, internet safety talks are organised. We provide adequate supervision during break time. A rota is drawn up and displayed in the staff room. At present 2 teachers and 1 SNA are on duty each break time.
- All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour. Staff are encouraged to tell the class teacher of concerns about children in the classroom.
- Through our education programme we make clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly and are not 'telling tales'.

Education and Prevention Strategies.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies 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:

- Anti bullying lessons in accordance with the S.P.H.E. Programme from Junior Infants to 6th class explicitly teaching respectful language and respectful behaviour
- The Stay Safe Lessons on bullying which focus on the different types of bullying and what to do if bullied will be taught every second year
- Our RE programme embraces themes that encourage inclusion and tolerance.
- Oral work in all subjects to promote self-esteem and enhance relationships – especially in the area of SPHE.
- The Webwise Education programme is used in the senior classes.
- Implementation of the Incredible Years Strategies

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:-

- ✓ Class Teacher
- ✓ Deputy Principal
- ✓ Principal

Procedures in reporting

We aim to encourage an environment in our school where children can openly report incidents to their class teacher or any adult. Our Anti Bullying Policy will adopt the same procedures as our Code of Behaviour and our Complaints Procedure.

- The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with an allegation of bullying, in the first instance, will normally be the class teacher. Children will be encouraged to approach their class teacher with incidents of bullying.

- Incidents on the school yard will be reported to the teacher on duty on the yard. The teacher will then report the incident to the class teacher and in more serious incidents to the principal.
- If the situation cannot be resolved by the class teacher it may be referred to the principal &/or Deputy Principal. Serious acts of bullying may be referred to the BOM.
- An allegation of bullying may be raised with any teacher in the school. The teacher should refer the incident to the class teacher. Teachers will take appropriate measures regarding allegations in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

Procedures for Investigation

. 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:

- Our primary aim is to 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, the teacher will exercise professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with.
- Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the relevant teacher;
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- 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 between children as quickly as possible;
- Teachers will take a calm, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned;
- If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed individually or asked to write down their account of the incident(s) or met as a group. At the group meeting, each member may 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 possible pressures from the other members of the group after an interview;
- 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).
- Where the relevant teacher has 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 situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- ***Any disciplinary sanctions are a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school and are dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour policy.***
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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.
- 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 appropriate recording template;

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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 will 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 will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

The [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”.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will in accordance with the Children First and [the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#), be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardai as appropriate.

Recording of bullying allegations and procedures

Swift action will be taken by the relevant teacher when an allegation is made, in accordance with due process and the principles of natural justice. A template has been agreed for recording allegations. Completed templates will be kept in the child's file and in the box file 'Reported Incidences that were Investigated' / 'Confirmed Reported [Incidences that were Investigated]'. All records of bullying will be kept in accordance with the relevant Data Protection Legislation. Achonry National School's reporting template is used to record all pertinent information. Staff, pupils, parents, Guidance and HSE are involved as appropriate.

Supporting those effected by bullying

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

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by the school within the limits of resources available through the provision of opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Where appropriate and available a referral for counselling may be made through NEPS.

Support for pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be provided by the school within the limits of resources available. For those with low self-esteem this will include opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may be referred for counselling where appropriate and available to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Supervision 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. A timetable for supervision on the yard is in place. One member of the teaching staff and 1 SNA (under our current allocation) are on yard each break. This procedure helps us to observe children at play and to deal with any issues as they arrive. Each class grouping have a designated area in which to play and there are procedures in place 're

lining up both inside and outside.

Equality

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.

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.

Supports for Staff

Staff are made aware of in-service opportunities available in the local Education Centre. In-School support will also be sought as required – NEPS, PDST. Personal support is available through Carecall for teaching staff.

* *inspireworkplaces (www.inspirewellbeing.org)*

Adoption by BOM

This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management in February 2014 and will be reviewed on an annual basis or as the need arises. The most recent review took place on October 26th 2023.

Communication

Following its annual review this policy will be 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.

Ongoing evaluation

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management annually and/or as the need arises. The most recent review took place on October 3rd 2024. 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

Signed: _____
Principal

Dated: 03/10/2024

Date of next review: Academic Year 2024-2025.

Please see the following Attachments:

- **Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying.**
- **Practical Tips for Building a Positive School Culture and Climate.**
- **Key Elements of a Positive School Culture and Climate.**

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

6.8.1 School authorities must ensure that the school has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and that these are set out in the school's anti-bullying policy. The school's procedures must be consistent with the following:

- (i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must 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 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (ix) All interviews should 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;

- (x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should 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 a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (xi) 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 each other's statements;
- (xii) 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;
- (xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should 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 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 their pupils;
- (xv) Where the relevant teacher has 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 situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- (xvi) 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;
- (xvii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- (xviii) 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 recording template at [Appendix 3](#)

(See Section 6.8.10 (iii));

- (xix) 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;
- (xx) 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;
- (xxi) 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.

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- 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 a disability or SEN. Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent. 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 with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- 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 can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour. Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
 - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - 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.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.