



# **Anti-Bullying Policy**

## **For**

# **Rathkeevin National School**

**Rathkeevin National School** is a Catholic co-educational primary school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford & Lismore.

“Catholic Ethos” in the context of a Catholic primary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at promoting:

- a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects;
- b) and a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- c) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- d) the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith,

and provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference. In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of **Rathkeevin National School** shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

#### **Mission Statement**

**Rathkeevin National School is a school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure learning environment, where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of our pupils are identified and addressed.**

**While Rathkeevin National School is a school with a Catholic ethos, it also gives due recognition to children of all other religious beliefs and none.**

**We aim to provide an appropriate, stimulating and broadly challenging education for all of our pupils. We aim to encourage language learning and the appreciation of languages and their place in our culture and heritage.**

**Rathkeevin National School encourages the involvement of parents through home-school contacts and through their involvement in the development and growth of the Parents' Association.**

**At Rathkeevin National School we endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in the pupils respect for themselves, for other people and for property and to encourage the development of personal responsibility. We aim to prepare our pupils for their place in a modern multicultural society by actively promoting equality and by celebrating the diversity we have within our school community.**

**We strive to promote, both individually and collectively, the professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes.**

**Rathkeevin National School encourages our pupils to have respect for diversity, be environmentally aware and develop appreciation of our community.**



**The general aims of primary education in Rathkeevin NS as set down by the Department of Education:**

- 1. To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.**
- 2. To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society.**
- 3. To prepare the child for a continuum of learning.**

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

1. 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 Rathkeevin 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. This policy has been updated in line with the guidelines in 'Cineáltas: An Action Plan on Bullying'.
2. The Board of Management recognizes the serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:
  - A positive school culture and climate which –
    - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
    - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
    - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
  - Effective leadership;
  - A school-wide approach;
  - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
  - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
    - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;
  - 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
3. **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.*

*This definition has been updated in 'Cineáltas' and defines bullying as;*

*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.*

*‘Cineáltas’ then describes the core elements of that definition as such;*

#### *A. Targeted behaviour*

*Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the child or young person displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example low self esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long term negative impact on the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the child or young person experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other child or young person, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school’s code of behaviour.*

#### *B. Repeated behaviour*

*Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying, but must still be addressed under the school’s code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can however be seen as bullying behaviour.*

#### *C. Imbalance of power*

*In incidents of bullying, the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted person to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.*

The following types of 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.

#### **4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are:**

All reports of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, will be dealt with in the first instance by the class teacher. The principal will become involved at the request of the class teacher when necessary or in serious incidences. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

#### **5. Education and prevention strategies**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

##### **School-wide approach**

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it

##### **Prevention and intervention.**

- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school. (see Acceptable Usage Policy)
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s)s are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school.
- Encourage a culture of reporting, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. Children are regularly reminded that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Developing a culture of Respect. Respect yourself, Respect Others, Respect Property
- Reform, not blame approach.
- Parents who suspect that their child is being bullied should inform the school at the earliest opportunity by an appointment with the class teacher.



### **Supports within the school may include:**

- Rathkeevin N.S has achieved SHIELD status with the ISPCC and has access to all related resources
- Teachers have access to and should be familiar with The Anti Bullying Procedures 2013, particularly Section 3, highlighting Impacts and Indicators of Bullying Behaviour.
- Anti Bullying Posters
- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Circle Time
- Promotion of Positive Behaviour
  - Role Modelling of positive and respectful behaviour
- Appropriate levels of supervision
- A list of School and Class Rules
- Parent/Teacher meetings
  - Access to the Counselling in Schools Programme Piloted in Rathkeevin in 2024
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g., Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, FUSE.
  - Incorporating Programmes and resources such as A Lust for Life, Friends First, Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends, Webwise and SHIELD as appropriate
- Delivery of lessons on Cyber Bullying
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying

### **6. 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:**

The primary aim 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). Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

### **Reporting bullying behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher (we recommend the class teacher) in the school.
- All reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
  - Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

### **Investigating and dealing with incidents:**

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. Where appropriate, this will be in consultation with other relevant staff members.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- Due regard will be given to the rights and responsibilities of all pupils concerned.
- Pupils who are not directly involved may also provide useful information.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken.
- Where a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to them that they are in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get them to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It will also be made clear to those involved (pupils and parents/guardian(s) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, it is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

#### **Step 1 - Informal**

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them (Incident Report Form).
- The Incident Report Form is given to the relevant teacher, who must keep it and record the actions taken on the reverse-side of sheet.

#### **Step 2 - Determination that bullying has occurred(Formal)**

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, he/she will keep a written record of the discussion with those involved. This record is to assist the teacher to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The perpetrator will be required to sign and keep a promise that they will not reoffend.
- All records will be stored by the class teacher in a locked filing cabinet.
- At the end of the year they will be placed in a file in the secretary's office.

#### **Step 3 • If the pupil re-offends.**

- Both the perpetrator and the parents will be required to sign a new promise guaranteeing that there will be no further offences.

- It will be brought to their attention that any further incidents will result in disciplinary action.

#### **Step 4.**

- In the case of further bullying behaviour occurring the school's Code of Behaviour will apply.
- It will also be made clear to those involved (pupils and parents/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, it is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

### **6. D.E.S. Requirement.**

In the following circumstance the relevant teacher must use the recording template to record the bullying behaviour:

- In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. Records will be stored in a secure file in the principal's office.

### **7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows: As deemed appropriate by the Relevant teacher/Principal**

- In-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g. - Pastoral care system - Group work such as circle time, resources such as A Lust for Life, Zippy's Friends, Friends for Life, Friends First

- Individual/Group Sessions with S.E.T

- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

- Counselling in Schools Pilot Scheme 2024

- Pupils are regularly reminded that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

### **8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

### **9. 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 14/06/2021 and updated most recently in June 2024. 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. 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: Peter O'Leary Signed: Diarmuid Burke  
(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: 25/06/2024

Date: 25/06/2024

Date of next review: 20/06/25

***Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):***

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
  - Shouting and uncontrolled anger,
  - Personal insults,
  - Verbal abuse,
  - Offensive language directed at an individual,
  - Continually shouting or dismissing others,
  - Public verbal attacks/criticism,
  - Domineering behaviour,
  - Open aggression,
  - Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.
- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
  - Treating in a dictatorial manner,
  - Ridicule,
  - Persistent slagging,
  - Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.
  - Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork.

- **Interference with property, for example:**
  - Stealing/damaging books or equipment
  - Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
  - Demanding money with menaces
  - Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
  - Marking/defacing property
- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**
  - Condescending tone,
  - Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,
  - Writing of anonymous notes,
  - Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments,
  - Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes,
  - Knowingly spreading rumours,
  - Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,
  - Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),
  - Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),
  - Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,
  - Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.
- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**
  - Deliberately marginalizing an individual
  - Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,
  - Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational
  - Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.