

Portmarnock Community School



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 Portmarnock Community 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.
2. This **policy aims** to assist our goals at Portmarnock Community School that aim to create a safe and caring environment for all our students as outlined in our school mission statement i.e. *To instil a spirit of intellectual enquiry and academic endeavour, To foster the desire for participation and challenge, To build individual and compassionate men and women of character.*
3. 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 including homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

4. **All members of the school community are subject to this policy.** Bullying behaviour such as cyber bullying which breaks the law may be referred to the Gardaí. The policy will be applicable during

a. School time (including break/lunch times)

b. Going to and from school.

c. School tours/trips.

d. Extracurricular activities.

e. Any occasion when the student is in uniform.

The school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at any location; any time of day/night; during any activity, function or programme, if in the opinion of the school management the alleged bully has created a hostile environment at school for the student being targeted. If the bullying has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school, the school also reserves the right to apply its Anti-Bullying policy.

5. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, Bullying Behaviour is **defined** as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conduct, 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.

Sexting is the sharing of sexual text, video, and photographic content using mobile phones, apps, social networking services and other internet technologies. The sharing of explicit text, images and/or video, is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour and will have serious consequences and sanctions for those involved in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Please note that:

- All incidents involving creating, storing, or sharing of explicit text, images and/or video of children under the age of 17 years will be reported as an incident to the Gardaí and Tusla and the State Claims Agency (to the latter as there is the potential to cause injury/harm to the individual).
- Sharing of explicit text, images and/or videos of pupils in the school will incur serious sanctions including suspension and expulsion as determined by the Board of Management.

NB: 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 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*.

Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

It is the right of *every member* of Portmarnock Community School to work in an environment free from any form of fear and intimidation. It is the responsibility of each and every member of Portmarnock Community School to ensure that bullying of any form is not tolerated and, when observed or experienced, that it is reported to the appropriate person.

Types of Bullying

The following are *some* of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur:

General Behaviours which apply to all:

- **Physical aggression:** this behaviour includes pushing, shoving, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain; therefore, such behaviour will not be tolerated in the PCS community.
- **Harassment:** based on any of the nine grounds contained in equality legislation; including sexual, homophobic, racist.
- **Intimidation:** some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of aggressive body language or use of the voice as a weapon.
- **Name-calling:** persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance eg size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name-calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material, or interference with a student's locker or other belongings which may be defaced, broken stolen or hidden. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor in such instances.

- **Offensive graffiti**
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other **materials** aimed at intimidating another person.
- **Extortion:** demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted student not delivering on the demand). A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who engaged in bullying behaviour.
- **insulting or offensive gestures**
- **Invasion of personal space**
- A combination of any of the types of behaviour listed

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, instant messaging apps (eg Snapchat), gaming sites, chat rooms, email and other online technology. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying:

- Denigration: spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- Harassment: continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to a person
- Impersonation: posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name, a false identity or 'fake accounts'
- Flaming: using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online dispute
- Trickery: fooling someone into sharing personal information which may then be posted online
- Outing: demanding, posting or sharing confidential or compromising information/ messages or images
- Exclusion: purposely excluding someone from an on-line group
- Cyber stalking: on-going harassment that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety, such as: silent phone calls, abusive telephone calls, texts or other messages, abusive communications/ comments on social media sites, blogs, vlogs or pictures

Identity Based Behaviours

- Homophobic and Transgender: spreading rumours, name calling, taunting, intimidation or threats based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Race/ background/ nationality/ membership of a community: discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about race, nationality, culture, social class, ethnic or traveller background. Exclusion of individual(s) on the basis of any of these.
- Isolation/ Exclusion: Occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class/ peer group. This practice is often initiated/ prompted by the person engaged in the bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the student in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the person targeted or by whispering insults about them loud enough for the target and/ or peers to hear
- Relational Bullying: relational bullying involves manipulating relationships. Behaviours include: undermining relationships, spreading rumours, breaking confidences, ignoring or 'bitching'. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up

against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; giving someone ‘the silent treatment’ (isolation/ exclusion)

- Sexual: unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment (as before)

NB: The means of bullying are constantly changing and types of bullying behaviour can be expanded in light of the experience of the school

1. **It is of the utmost importance that students tell if they are being bullied in school or if they know if another student is being bullied.** The student may report bullying to any teacher or adult in the school community. Investigation of reports of alleged bullying are undertaken within our Pastoral Care Structure, i.e. Teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Counsellor, Chaplain, Deputy Principal, Principal as deemed appropriate in the context of the alleged bullying and the school’s Code of Behaviour.
7. **The education and prevention strategies** (including Wellbeing strategies specifically aimed at supporting preventing cyber bullying and identity-based bullying including, in particular, homophobia and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:
 - There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all in accordance with the school ethos.
 - Knowledge of bullying in Sixth Class may be utilised in order to put preventative measures in place. **The importance of sharing information that can assist the school in applying this policy will be emphasised at Information Evenings.**
 - Incoming First Years are briefed on the anti-bullying ethos of the school during their orientation programme.
 - All year groups are informed about the anti-bullying policy during assembly.
 - Prefects and the Student Council are encouraged to emphasise the importance of the school view of an anti-bullying culture.
 - Further awareness for stakeholders will be carried out with the effective communication and circulation of this policy.
 - Anti-bullying classes will be provided through our Wellbeing (Junior Cycle) and RSE (Senior Cycle) curricular provision, as well as established ‘Friendship Week’ and ‘Cool Schools’ programmes.
 - The Anti-Bullying policy operates in conjunction with the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (L.G.B.T.+) issues will be highlighted through a poster campaign at a given week in the school year. This poster campaign will be supported by work in the SPHE classes.
 - We aim to facilitate a culture whereby students, teachers and parents are aware of their roles/responsibilities where bullying is concerned. There is advice for students in Appendix 1 of this policy and for parents in Appendix 2.
 - The **Wellbeing** programme throughout Junior Cycle; Tutor sessions and Year Head Assemblies all have significant roles in informing students about anti-bullying.
8. 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);

The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.

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 in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head and DLP/DDLP.
- Teaching staff 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 Year Head; **reporting procedures and Mandated Responsibilities will also be in line with the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017**
- DLP/DDLP will decide in each instance whether the 'threshold of harm' for reporting to Tusla and/ or the Garda Síochána has been met

Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the Year Head in conjunction with SMT will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- 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 relationship of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the Year Head 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;
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, if appropriate, all those involved may be met as a group. Staff will remain mindful that the school's Restorative Practice approach may not always be appropriate in situations involving bullying behaviour; the wellbeing and safeguarding of students will be central to decisions taken regarding this, on a case by case basis. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
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 Year Head that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- Where the Year Head 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;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

Follow up and recording

- 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.
- 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.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Pupils.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner with written records made contemporaneously or as close as possible to the event/ disclosure of the concern, in line with DES requirements and staff training regarding best practice in making and maintaining records. Template for reporting when required is available on VS Ware

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the Year Head
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head they must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The Year Head must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

Informal-determination that bullying has occurred.

- If it is established by the Year Head that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved.

Formal-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The Anti Bullying Template must be used when the Year Head/DP has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred.

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 4** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) in cases where they consider 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;
- b) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or a Deputy Principal (DLP or DDLP) these should be in line with the school's code of behaviour.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the Year Head, a copy maintained by the principal in a secure place and reported to the next Board of Management meeting under 'Anti Bullying Reports'.

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No blame approach
- A restorative justice approach where appropriate training has been given.

9. The school's **proof of support for working with pupils affected by bullying** is as follows:

- Students who have been involved in bullying incidents will be advised by their Tutor/Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal of the availability of the Guidance Counsellor/Chaplain.
- The target of bullying may receive counselling to help them regain their self-esteem where affected.
- The student involved in the bullying may also receive counselling to give them the opportunity to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

- Students who witnessed bullying are encouraged to discuss it with a teacher and if assistance with a Counsellor/Chaplain is required, their availability will be ascertained.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 10th March 2020.

13. 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.

14. This policy and its implementation will be **reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year**. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management
Siobhan Murray

Signed: _____ Principal
Helen Tobin

Date: 13th September 2020.

Appendix One – Advice for Students - Advice for Students on Bullying/Cyber Bullying

- It is essential to tell a teacher, your parents/guardians or any significant adult of any bullying. It is the only way it will be stopped.
- Always be aware of your online behaviour and how to protect yourself from cyber-bullies.
- Save messages or take a screen shot of abusive messages.
- Keep passwords private.
- Do not put too much personal information about yourself online.
- Do not reply to abusive messages/posts.
- If the bully is a “friend or follower” on Facebook or other social networking site, remove them. You should block unwelcome messages, videos, photos etc.
- Report the issue to the mobile phone or website provider. If sufficiently serious report the matter to the Gardaí.
- If cyber bullying is impacting on your school life, tell a teacher.
- Always keep a detailed record of the bullying as evidence for the teacher.

Appendix Two – Advice for Parents on Bullying

Advice for Parents on Bullying/Cyber Bullying

- Control the use of mobile phones/social media during homework and at bed time.
- Stress the importance of online responsibility and check social media.
- Prepare them for the possibility of bullying and should it occur the importance of speaking about it to you.
- Continue to work on their self-esteem in order to build emotional resilience.
- Be aware of signs and indicators of bullying. [Pages 11-12 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* – link on school website].
- Encourage them to include others in their social group and be generally inclusive.

- Take time to understand the social networking sites they use.
- Use trusted websites for advice on keeping them safe i.e., www.barnardos.ie
- Encourage them to tell if they are being bullied and report incidents to the school

Appendix Three – Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school’s anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school’s anti-bullying policy will be required.

Yes /No

| | |
|--|--|
| Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ? | |
| Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents’ association? | |
| Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)? | |
| Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day-to-day work? | |
| Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils? | |
| Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies? | |
| Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented? | |
| Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined? | |
| Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy? | |
| Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal? | |
| Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal’s periodic report to the Board? | |
| Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school’s handling of bullying incidents? | |
| Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school’s handling of a bullying situation? | |
| Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school’s handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed? | |
| Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour? | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement? | |
| Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement? | |
| | |

Signed _____

Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____

Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____

Date _____

Principal