

Newtown School

Anti-Bullying Policy

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” [Matthew 7:12]

Walk cheerfully upon the earth addressing that of God in everyone. [George Fox]

1 Preamble

Newtown School aims to encourage each student to develop his or her full potential, to mature as an individual and to become a constructive and caring member of society.

The School aims to create and maintain a happy and caring climate that encourages and rewards students to respect the feelings of others. We try to develop an understanding among our students that unkind actions and remarks are completely unacceptable, even if they are not intended to hurt. We ask our students not to tolerate bullying behaviour and we emphasise that it is the responsibility of everyone, and not just the victim, to report it.

The underlying principle here is that of kindness and tolerance. Newtown School emphasises and encourages tolerance, politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property as fundamental principles of behaviour. This is a clear part of the ethos of Newtown School and is stated in unambiguous terms in the Principles of the School Community and in the Code of Behaviour entitled “Living and Working in the School Community”¹. Acceptance of a place in Newtown School is taken as acceptance of this ethos.²

We believe that everyone has the right to feel safe and secure in the school environment. Teachers and staff are entitled to teach and work, and students are entitled to learn and play, both, free from any intimidation.

Bullying is any behaviour which seeks to intimidate or humiliate and which is repeated, intentional, unprovoked, malicious, such as to cause distress, unhappiness or insecurity. *It is the misuse of power and it is always hurtful;*

Bullying has detrimental and damaging effects, some of which are fear, anxiety, loss of confidence and depression. Students learning in a climate of fear and resentment do not reach their full potential.

Bullies rely on silence. It is important that bullying behaviour be reported at all times. Anyone who feels threatened has the right to tell others, staff or students, so that action can be taken to rectify the situation.

Furthermore, it is the duty of those aware of such situations to ensure that they inform the relevant people. We regard ‘not telling’ as tantamount to involvement. It is essential that anyone who becomes aware of or suspects that intimidating behaviour is taking place should inform an appropriate person.

Bullying and intimidation of others is completely unacceptable.

1 See the Newtown School “Living and Working in the School Community”.

2 For examples of how this ethos is communicated, please refer to Appendix 1.

2. Department of Education & Skills Legal Requirements

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, School Committee of Newtown 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.

School Committee recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students 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 students 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 students; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- 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 Definition

Newtown School endorses the definition of bullying published by the Department of Education and Skills and in the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- Identity-based bullying such as, but not exclusive to, those included in the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*:

While isolated or once-off incidents of intimidation, aggression or intentional negative behaviour do not fall within the definition of "bullying", the School reserves the right to decide whether to

- Regard them as precursors of bullying behaviour and to apply this policy in order to prevent further escalation
or to
- Deal with them in accordance with the "Living and Working in the community" document.

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.

4 Basic Principles and Considerations

- 4.1 Every case of bullying is unique and often complex.
- 4.2 Newtown School reserves the right, at all times, to protect all the students and staff in its care from bullying behaviour.
- 4.3 Parents/guardians should inform the Class tutor / Cycle coordinator / House Staff of incidents which they suspect to be bullying or which have come to their attention indirectly through their children or other parents/guardians.
- 4.4 Investigations of allegations of bullying can take a considerable amount of time.
- 4.5 Investigations and resolutions of bullying behaviour must follow the process detailed in Section 7 of this policy.

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. For parents of both victims of bullying and those suspected of bullying such issues can be extremely distressing, so it is important to emphasise that

- teachers take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach
- witness evidence is used to determine the truest possible picture of what has happened
- students accused of bullying are treated with fairness
- the principles of natural justice must apply.

4.6 The school reserves the right apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the principal the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

5 Examples of Bullying Behaviour

The following are examples of behaviour which might be considered an act of bullying, but it is not an exclusive list:

- Physical contact
- Threatening abuse
- Humiliation
- Harassment (including repeated demands for money)
- Intimidation (including aggressive body language and gestures)
- Verbal abuse (including name calling)
- Spreading of rumours
- Obscene or aggressive language
- Deliberate exclusion or isolation
- Victimisation
- Offensive jokes
- Inappropriate comments related to, but not exclusive to, gender, disability, sexual orientation, race and creed.
- Intrusion through interference with personal property or belongings
- Unauthorised photography, audio and/or video recording

The above behaviour can be evident directly in person-to-person contact or indirectly through technology and electronic media (e.g. telephone, internet, social media).

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

6 Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that are used in the School to discourage all types of bullying are outlined in this document as Appendix 1: “Examples of how the School Ethos regarding Bullying is communicated” and Appendix 2: “Examples of Subject Areas with Anti-Bullying Content”.

7. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Allegations of Bullying in the School

The Primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)

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:

7.1 All reports of bullying should be made primarily to the Class Tutor, but may also be made to any teacher, any member of staff, a prefect or a senior student.

7.2 The Cycle Coordinator or Deputy Principal will investigate the initial report. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, this staff member will be referred to as the “relevant teacher”. (see section 9)

7.3 Those allegedly involved will be interviewed and may be asked for a written account of the alleged incident.

7.4 The victim of the alleged bullying will be interviewed and assured that he/she is entitled to a school environment free of any bullying and will be encouraged to report any further incidents if they should occur. This may be by direct student-teacher communication or through a parent/guardian. This may also involve keeping a 'diary' or written record of further incidents.

If it is judged that bullying has occurred:

7.5 The investigating teacher will inform the Deputy Principal and/or Principal as appropriate. Normally the Principal will only be involved after the initial investigation has been completed. (It should be noted that the timeline for investigating and recording bullying behaviour does not preclude the relevant teacher from consulting with the Principal and/or the Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to the case.)

7.6 Where bullying behaviour is determined, the perpetrator(s) will be informed that their behaviour is a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour. They may be required to re-affirm their commitment to the School's Code of Behaviour.

7.7 The parents of the bully will be informed and/or invited to an interview in the school.

7.8 The parents of the victim will also be informed and, where it is deemed necessary, may be offered further help from the school.

7.9 Following investigation and consideration, sanctions may be imposed in line with the School’s discipline procedures.

7.10 Where bullying behaviour is determined to be of a grave nature, additional procedures may take place.

7.11 Counselling may be offered to both the bully and the victim, as deemed necessary.

Where persistent or serious bullying occurs:

7.12 Parents/guardians may be invited to an interview with the Deputy Principal or Principal. In such cases parents/guardians will be reminded of the content of this policy.

7.13 Reference may be made to “Living and Working in the School Community”
“ In circumstances where the continued presence of a student at school were to become untenable because of wilful disobedience, threatening, abusive or violent behaviour, the Principal reserves the right in the interests and well-being of other members of the school community to ask parents/guardians to withdraw the offending scholar from the school pending investigation or referral to an appropriate authority.”

Parents/guardians signing the acceptance /final application form agree “to remove the child from the school at any time if so requested by the headmaster.”³

7.14 It must be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, their parents/guardians and the school.

7.15 In accordance with Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, serious instances of bullying may be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services or the Gardai as appropriate. In consultation with these agencies an additional response may be required.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the School has dealt with a bullying case appropriately, the parents shall be referred to the School’s complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted these procedures and is still not satisfied, the School will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8. Counselling and Ongoing Support

The School’s programme of support for students affected by bullying is as follows:

- A programme of support for students who have been bullied may be put in place. Many students will be able to continue their lives without any support at all, but some may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills or to build resilience whenever this is needed.
- A programme of ongoing support for those students involved in bullying behaviour may also be part of the School’s intervention process. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others, or they may need activities to help them develop maturity or increase feelings of self-worth.
- Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will also receive ongoing support if required.

9 Procedures for Recording and Reporting Bullying Behaviour

All records of bullying behaviour shall be maintained in nominated place within the school in accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

- 9.1 While all reports, including anonymous reports, of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved.
- 9.2 If it is established that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher shall keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- 9.3 The relevant teacher will use the Recording Template in Appendix 3 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.
- 9.4 Where it is established that bullying behaviour has occurred, the relevant teacher shall report this to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- 9.5 Every regular meeting of School Committee shall include bullying as an agenda item. The Principal or Deputy Principal shall report on any instances of bullying that have been reported as well as the interventions and/or sanctions by the School. (The students involved shall not be identified.)
- 9.6 The implementation and effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy shall also be frequently included as an agenda item for staff meetings to ensure that concerns about the policy, or the welfare of individual students, can be shared effectively and addressed.

10. Bullying of Staff

Complaints of bullying or harassment of staff will be dealt with according to the Code of Practice and Procedures agreed between the JMB, ASTI, TUI and Impact and in accordance with current law.

11. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

Subject to the resources provided by the Department of Education & Skills, the Principal and School Committee endeavours to ensure that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

12. Prevention of Harassment

School Committee 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 students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

13. Adoption and Distribution of this policy

This policy was adopted by School Committee on the date below and made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and students on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education & Skills and the Patron if requested.

14. Review

The effectiveness of this Anti-Bullying Policy shall be the subject of continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. School Committee shall make provision for periodic

examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place and will undertake an annual review of this policy and its implementation in accordance with the terms of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Newtown School personnel, the Newtown Association (Fulfilling the role of the Parents' Association Committee), and the Student Council will be involved in this process. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department of Education & Skills.

Approved by the School Committee

Date 26th May 2014

Appendix 1

Examples of how the School Ethos regarding Bullying is communicated

Teachers and staff are committed to creating and maintaining an atmosphere in the school in which bullying is not tolerated.

- All parents are sent a copy of the school Code of Conduct to be signed as accepted by all students and parents.
- All 1st year students and new entrants are informed in their first month in the school that Newtown School does not tolerate bullying and will be pro-active in identifying bullying behaviour.
- Bullying is dealt with in several subject areas, but particularly in Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) class. (See Appendix 2)
- Reference is frequently made at morning Collect to the rights and responsibilities of all at school to feel secure and more generally to the Newtown School Ethos.
- From their very first day in the School, and frequently afterwards, students are encouraged to report any problems, including bullying, to somebody else rather than suffering in silence.
- There is a very strong expectation of students not just to report matters affecting them, but also that they must report unpleasantness or unhappiness which they have witnessed. Given that bullying behaviour tends to develop where bystanders say nothing, Newtown School students will often be reminded that it is the onlooker who is most responsible for ending the bullying.
- A sociogram is conducted each year for all years from 1st to 4th. This allows for anonymity in the bringing forth of information by students in a year group. The information gathered is then be feedback to the whole group to highlight what inappropriate behaviours are taking place and in certain circumstances individuals will be spoken to in isolation.
- Staff will meet each term to discuss each year group in reports meetings and these meetings can often bring to light concerns that bullying behaviour may be taking place within the year group.
- The Junior and Senior Cycle Coordinators will get to know every student throughout their time in the school and frequently emphasise the importance of letting them know if there is a problem – for them or for others in the class.

Appendix 2 Examples of Subject Areas with Anti-Bullying Content

Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.)

Junior Cycle : A Bullying Awareness module will be completed in each year as part of the overall SPHE programme.

Modules of the course will be based on the importance of respecting yourself and each other. Bullying will also be dealt with under many headings, such as peer pressure, people's differences, things that can be perceived as bullying and what is actually bullying, internet and social media use, etc.

The key messages are:

- a. You can't expect to be friends with everyone you meet in life, but respect, kindness and support should be shown to all.
- b. It takes courage to speak out about incidents. By staying silent you become part of the problem.
- c. Everyone has a choice about how they act towards one another.
- d. Everyone has a personal responsibility to make their year group the best they can.

C.S.P.E

Bullying would come up for discussion under the topics of social justice and under Rights and responsibilities

Appendix 3

Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report

4. Location of incidents

5. Name of person reporting the bullying concern

6. Nature/type of Bullying Behaviour

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) **Date** _____