



Holmpatrick National School

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Anti Bullying Policy 2024

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and *the code of behaviour guidelines* issued by the NEWB (National Education Welfare Board), the Board of Management of Holmpatrick 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.

2. 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 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.

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 e.g. 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.

Descriptions of Types of bullying

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

- **Physical aggression**: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in ‘mess fights’, they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation**: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying**: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. 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 (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.
- **Cyber-bullying**: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. 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. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person’s sexuality, appearance, etc.
- **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, e.g., 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 pupil’s locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion**: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

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. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual class teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

5. Combating Bullying and Action Towards Prevention:

Role of Staff:

Staff will:

- Exercise constant vigilance in the matter of misbehaviour, aiming to prevent misbehaviour rather than control it. Positive behaviour should be recognised, affirmed and sought.
- Deal with complaints of bullying quickly, firmly and fairly in line with this policy.
- Develop an awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour – in the classroom, at assemblies, through the school policies (Code of Behaviour, Ethos Statement) and other occasions when the opportunity arises.
- Teach pupils skills and encourage children to report any incident of bullying
- Provide opportunities for children to talk about their worries, feelings, etc. through listening systems such as Circle Time.
- Prevention and any awareness raising measures should focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. Teach the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes on a yearly basis. Other similar issues will regularly be addressed in SPHE lessons, webwise.ie lessons and RSE lessons.
- Use the Curriculum to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour e.g. use of literature in English, role play in Drama, co-operation and group enterprise e.g. during SESE. There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Prevention and any awareness raising measures should focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.

Initiatives/ Programmes to be used:

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Stay Safe Programme
- RSE programme
- www.webwise.ie : Prevention and awareness raising measures focused on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying will be used by teachers during the year. The class teacher can teach the pupils to tell someone they trust, help the child to keep relevant evidence for investigation by taking screen shots or printing web pages and by not deleting mobile messages, show the child how to prevent cyber bullying happening again by-changing password and contact details, blocking

contacts, reporting abuse on site. Ensure that the child knows not to retaliate or return the message and encourage the child to keep personal information private online.

- **Barnardos anti bullying workshops**: for Teachers, Pupils and Parents- the facilities and workshops provided by Barnardos will be fundraised by the school and used on a regular basis.

Advice for pupils:

- **Be assertive.** Say No, Walk Away Confidently & Tell Someone. Fighting back makes things worse. Talk to a teacher or parent(s)/guardian(s). If you need support find a friend and both of you speak to the teacher.
- **Tell and keep telling** until the problem goes away.
- **Believe in yourself.** Don't believe what the bully says of you. You know that's not true.
- **Check out your body language.** Practice walking with confidence, standing straight with head held high and taking deep breaths.
- **Practice assertiveness.** Stand tall, look the bully in the eye, breathe steadily, speak calmly and firmly. This can help you to feel stronger, and also makes you look more confident.
- **Don't suffer in silence** – talk to someone you trust. It always helps to share a problem and to know that you are not alone.
- **If an adult is bullying you, then look for help from another adult you can trust.** You have rights, and you must insist on them. There are rules and procedures to deal with adult bullies at home, in school, in sport clubs and where people work. If you are too nervous, take along a friend.
- **Choose when to resist.** Sometimes the only sensible thing to do is to give in. Just get away and tell someone.
- **Try not to use violence.** It never solves anything, and usually just makes the situation worse.
- **Keep a diary.** Keep a record of details – who, where, when, how – as this will make it easier for you when you tell your story.
- **Have an answer ready.** Well chosen words can often make a bully look foolish, and that's the last thing they want!
- **Try not to show you are upset or angry** (even if you are). Reacting to the bully is only giving them what they want.
- **If there's a gang involved try to approach each person on their own,** rather than when they're together. If you talk straight to them, you'll probably find that they're not so confident without the protection of the group.
- **Ask your friends to support you.** Bullies don't like being outnumbered or isolated.
- **Try to make new friends** if the ones you have at the moment seem to enjoy trying to make you feel bad.
- **Change your routine.** Try to avoid being on your own in places where you are likely to be picked on.

In the case of cyber bullying:

- Don't reply to the message
- Keep a copy of the message. Block the sender

If you see someone being bullied and ignore it, you are part of the bullying. If you see someone being bullied, you should:

- Take action
- Tell an adult immediately

Advice for Parents:

- Be good role models for children and young people; Teach young people to respect and value difference and diversity;
- Be sensitive to unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly.
- Always take an active role in your child's education.
- If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- It is important to advise your child not to fight back and make sure they are fully aware of this policy. Children should not be afraid to ask for help.
- Make it clear to your child that bullying is not an acceptable behaviour.
- Support the school in measures taken to resolve bullying behaviour.
- Keep yourself informed and up to date with Cyber Bullying and internet safety through www.webwise i.e. which hosts up to date documents, tips and advice e.g. 'Get With it- A parent's Guide to Social Networking', European Network and Information Security Agency 'Virtual Worlds', 'Get with it: A parent's Guide to Cyber Bullying' etc.

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:

Procedures for Noting and Reporting Bullying Behaviour:

- Suspected bullying can be reported by all members of the school community: teachers, SNAs, parents, cleaning staff, lollypop ladies, group leaders, bus drivers, sports leaders, etc. They should be referred to the class teachers of the children concerned.
- Class teachers should record any instances reported, noting specific incidents of bullying behaviour where possible.
- Inform and discuss alleged matter with the school principal and other staff members.
- Follow procedures listed below.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

In all matters, the following will apply:

- The class teacher will investigate cases of suspected bullying with input from the principal.
- The teacher will speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that everybody is clear about what has been said.

- When speaking to the pupils, the teacher will seek to establish what, if any, incidents of bullying behaviour have taken place. Answers to the questions of what, where, when, who and why should be sought.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, a meeting/discussion will take place with the parents of the two parties involved to
 - (a) Inform them about the bullying behaviour.
 - (b) Explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring to the school policy.
 - (c) Discuss ways in which they can reinforce/support the actions taken by the school.

If it is established by the relevant teacher 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 relationships of the parties involved.

(iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) 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 bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances above, the recording template at **Appendix 1** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 1** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

If bullying has taken place, the following stages will be followed

Stage 1:

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. Records will be maintained in line with policies in place. The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff will proceed to stage two.

Stage 2:

In some cases of bullying, a 'No Blame Approach' will be taken. It is a simple 7 step process that has the following four essential ingredients – the absence of blame, the encouragement of empathy, shared responsibility and problem solving. This approach is particularly useful in dealing with group bullying and name-calling. However, it may be an inappropriate response to other types of bullying. It should only be applied with the full agreement of the bullied child and if the children carrying out the bullying behaviour are capable of understanding the hurt they have caused. A small number of children who bully others have serious social, emotional and behavioural problems. In such cases this approach should not be used.

- **Step 1 - Talk with the victim**

Teacher talks to the victim to establish the impact that the bullying has had on them. It is not designed to gather "facts" about who said or did what to whom. The victim will be encouraged to suggest the names of people to form a group who should help solve the problem. These will include those involved,

colluders and perhaps friends of the victim. The victim is also asked to produce a piece of writing or a picture to express how the bullying is affecting them.

- **Step 2 - Convene a meeting of the group**
Teacher gathers the group together ensuring that there is a balance between helpful and reliable students and those whose behaviour has been causing a problem.
- **Step 3 - Explain the problem**
Teacher explains that there is a problem and that “x” is experiencing certain difficulties. Without discussing specific incidents or accusations the facilitator explains how “x” is feeling using the piece of writing from the victim to illustrate this.
- **Step 4 - Share responsibility**
Teacher points out that no one is going to be punished and that the group has been convened to help solve the problem because there is a shared responsibility for “Sarah’s” happiness.
- **Step 5 - Ask for ideas**
Teacher asks the group to suggest ways that they may be able to alleviate the suffering felt by the victim. Members of the group are encouraged to use “I” (I will sit next to her in lessons, I will walk to school with her, etc.) so that they take ownership of the solution. These ideas are not imposed on the group by the facilitator.
- **Step 6 - Leave it up to them**
Teacher ends the meeting by passing responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support and arranges a meeting to see how things are going.
- **Step 7 - Meet them again**
Teacher meets each of the group individually a week later to see how things are going.

Stage 3:

The principal and class teacher will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of the bully. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings. The child who is bullying will be placed on report. This means that the child’s behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. The child has three meetings with his/her teacher regarding what will be written for that part of the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work, etc. will be noted. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The purpose of this report is to focus on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour. The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential. Initially a review of the report will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the principal, class teacher, parents and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon. The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the principal, class teacher and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bully.

Stage 4:

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the principal in consultation with the child’s parents and Board of Management in line with the school’s Code of Behaviour. Sanctions are implemented with the aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the child’s self-esteem. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child.

If it is established by the relevant teacher 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 relationships of the parties involved.

(iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

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Referral of serious cases to the HSE

In relation to bullying in schools, *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 should, 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 Gardaí as appropriate.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

7. The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying will be drawn up specifically for each pupil’s needs in accordance with the initiatives/ programmes to be used for prevention/ education of bullying as set out in section five of this policy.

Pupils being bullied:

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be put in place in line with the pupils needs. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

Pupils bullying:

Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil’s self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling offered to them to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe bullying:

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

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

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))

4. location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	
Other	

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	
Other	

5. Name of person who reported bullying concern:

6. Type of bullying behaviour (tick relevant box (es))

Physical aggression		Cyber bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name calling		Other (specify)	

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

Homophobic	Dias ability/Special Educational Needs related	Racist	Member of the travelling community	Other (Specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of action taken

Signed: _____ Relevant teacher

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 2: Checklist for annual review

The Board of Management 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 _____ Date _____
Principal