



# Aston Village Educate Together National School Anti-Bullying Policy

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## Rationale

The rationale behind this Anti-Bullying policy is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and all in the school community by taking a strong stance against bullying, both by preventing and dealing with it, and to ensure correct procedures are followed by staff members in this area.

## Aims of this policy:

This policy document aims to:

- Identify Key Staff and their responsibilities
- Outline the guiding principles of our anti-bullying policy
- Detail what bullying is and how it may occur
- Identify the procedures to be taken to investigate, record and follow up on incidences of bullying

## Policy ratification and communication:

This policy was formulated by John Kelleher (ex-Principal) and includes input from the staff, the Board of Management and Parents Association. This policy will be available to the wider school community via the school webpage. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Ratified by Board of Management on: 16/11/17

Signed:



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Dr. Conor Brennan  
Chairperson.

## Review Timetable and Associated Deadlines:

Monitoring of policy	Ongoing – informed by experience
Annual review	No later than December 2019 as per Educate Together requirements
Incident reporting	Ongoing as required.

Bullying survey	Once per term
Anti bullying week	First term each year
Summary report to BoM	Each meeting

## Key Staff and Responsibilities

Name	Position	Role	Description
Dermot McCullen	School Principal	Principal	Implementing the day-to-day operation of this policy  Reporting on instances of bullying (or lack thereof) to BoM at each meeting
Des Coyle	Assistant Principal	Anti-Bullying Coordinator	Implementing the day-to-day operation of this policy
Conor Brennan	Chairperson	Chairperson	Act on behalf of Board in implementing this policy

## Anti-Bullying Statement:

### 1.1 Guiding Principles

The school community of Aston Village ETNS believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s). Our 'Anti-Bullying Team,' consists of all members of the school community and exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a **“Reform, not Blame”** approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report. Pupils’ participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

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 Aston Village ETNS has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy should be read in conjunction with our code of discipline and mobile phone and technology usage policy. 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 recognizes 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 that:
  - Raise awareness
  - 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. 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.

4. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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.

## 1.2 What is bullying?

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 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Bullying of children by staff or parents, bullying of parents by staff or children, and bullying of staff by children or parents also falls under the remit of this policy.

Appendix C gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

### 1.3 Preventing Bullying

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme taught during each school year,
- For 1st to 6th classes a number of awareness-raising exercises per school year for each classroom in a two year cycle ([www.antibullying.ie](http://www.antibullying.ie)) pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
  - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
  - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
  - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school. **This survey should take place each term.** Pupils should be informed that they can tell their class teacher or any other trusted adult about bullying.
- Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the class teacher (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).
- Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups, parents/guardians are regularly informed of the activities of the school and encouraged to support its work in the area of anti bullying
- An annual anti-bullying week will take place in the first term.

## 1.4 Procedures for investigation and recording of bullying

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, (e.g. the six step approach available from the "Dealing with Incidents" section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website) are as follows:

- The class teacher (or assigned staff member, depending on the nature of the case involved) investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The School, through the assigned teacher reserves the right to ask any pupil to give an oral or written account (that the pupil is satisfied is accurate and complete) of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour. It should be borne in mind that seeking written accounts is a last resort in the process to clarify information. If there are a significant number of children to be communicated with regarding an incidence of bullying, the parents of the class involved should be notified by text. If there is a perceived language barrier involving any pupil involved, the school will attempt to find a suitable means of lifting any such language barrier.
- The assigned teacher will have a discussion with pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour & any reasons for it. The assigned teacher will take notes if relevant, often in the shape of the School Anti-Bullying Action Pack. Pupils should be identified using their first initial/roll number as appropriate. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they will sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally & respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The assigned teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. **If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.** Pupils who report bullying are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the assigned teacher will compile a file, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This will generally be the completed School Anti-Bullying Action Pack along with any other notes. Parents/Guardians of those involved will be informed. Other staff members will be informed on a need-to-know basis. In situations where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school should consult the HSE Children and Family Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying

behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents is retained securely and indefinitely, & accessible to those named in the documents, in line with data protection guidelines.
- The Principal shall give a report on the school's progress regarding anti-bullying to the Board of Management at each meeting.

### **1.5 Sanctions and follow-up**

- Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the class teacher and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

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

- Bullied pupils:
  - Ending the bullying behaviour,
  - Strengthening the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
  - Strengthening the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
  - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
  - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
  - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,



- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Bullying pupils:
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet,”
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
  - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
  - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,
  - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
  - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet” and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

## 1.6 Appendices & References

- A. [www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie)
- B. **Aston Village Anti-Bullying Pack containing:**
  - [Incident Report Form](#)
  - [Class Survey \(for 2nd to 6th\)](#)
  - [Information sheet before survey is given](#)
  - [Pupil Behaviour Promise](#)
  - [Bullying Discussion Sheet](#)
  - [Bullying Behaviour Checklist](#)

### C. Types of Bullying Behaviour

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 or 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.
  - Inappropriate questions/ comments re. personal life/family
  - Inappropriate questions/ 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 menace
  - 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 marginalising an individual
  - Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,

- o Deliberately preventing from joining in activities - work or recreational
- o Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.