

# Brannoxtown Community National School

## Anti-Bullying Policy

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Brannoxtown Community National School (CNS) is a primary school under Patronage of the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB). Brannoxtown CNS opened in September 2018 with a new Principal, Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick. Brannoxtown CNS operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and follows the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). The Principal and the Board of Management fully subscribe to the principles of partnership, accountability, inclusion, respect for diversity, parental choice and equality, in developing and implementing all school policies.

### 1. Introduction and Rationale

The Anti-Bullying policy for Brannoxtown CNS is developed within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour / Positive Behaviour Policy (Approved by the Board of Management, 10/2020). Other relevant school policies include the Child Protection Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) Policy. The school's Code of Behaviour provides the key context for this policy and it must be read in conjunction with the schools Positive Behaviour Policy.

### 2. School Ethos

At Brannoxtown CNS, staff take a holistic approach to the education and development of each child. We aim to support each child to develop his/her potential in a caring and secure environment. This aim is achieved when clear, shared values underpin all we do and when there is strong communication between staff, parents, children and the whole-school community. We believe that this policy, in conjunction with our Code of Behaviour Policy, will support positive behaviour at our school and enable all children to experience success at Brannoxtown CNS.

### 3. Principles of Practice

Staff and students at Brannoxtown CNS together create a positive school climate and culture in three key ways:

- welcoming difference and diversity and fostering inclusivity, integration and innovation
- encouraging and facilitating children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- promoting respectful relationships across the whole-school community.

Management of Brannoxtown CNS recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of children. The school is fully committed to the following practice principles to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour. Across the school community, we do this by working together in the following ways:

- creating a **positive school culture and climate** which
  - welcomes 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



- acknowledging the **uniqueness of each individual** and their worth
- planning curriculum to take a **holistic approach to values education**
- encouraging **positive habits** of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility
- actively **rejecting offensive or aggressive behaviour** by any members
- promoting **equity and gender equality** in all we do
- identifying **needs of 'at risk students'** and facilitate early intervention
- working in **partnership with parents**
- fostering an awareness of the **interdependence** of groups and communities
- nurturing **citizenship qualities** of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among members both in school and outside of school

Staff members have a shared responsibility, guided by the Principal, to actively anticipate and prevent bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

#### 4. Definition of Bullying

- 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) which is repeated over time. (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES)*
- This section distinguishes between isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour and bullying, i.e., unwanted one-off incidents or behaviours compared with behaviours which are systematic or repeated.

#### 5. Types of behaviour included in Bullying

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

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- Cyber-bullying
- 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.

Some behaviours which may initially appear to be 'bullying-behaviours' may not fall within the school's definition of bullying. These include isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging. The school responds to these behaviours, as appropriate, in accordance with our 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.

The following are Bullying Behaviours which Brannoxtown Community National School has identified as relevant to our context. General behaviours are identified initially, followed by six specific types of bullying behaviour.



<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li><li>• Physical aggression</li><li>• Damage to property</li><li>• Name calling or 'slagging'</li><li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li><li>• Offensive graffiti</li><li>• Insulting or offensive gestures, e.g., the "look"</li><li>• Invasion of personal space.</li></ul>
<p><b>1. Cyberbullying</b></p> <p><i>This category is included to recognise that cyber behaviour in the home can result in bullying behaviour in school and therefore warrants inclusion in the school's Anti-bullying Policy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation</li><li>• Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li><li>• Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name</li><li>• Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li><li>• Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</li><li>• Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li><li>• Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li><li>• Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment/denigration that causes considerable fear for one's safety including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Silent or abusive communications, e.g., calls, texts, emails, communication on social networks, etc.</li></ul></li></ul>
<p><b>2. Homophobic and Transgender Bullying</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation</li><li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation, e.g., name calling in a derogatory manner.</li><li>• Physical intimidation or attacks or threats</li></ul>
<p><b>3. Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li><li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li></ul>
<p><b>4. Relational</b></p>	<p>This type of bullying involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumours</li><li>• Ignoring, isolation and/or exclusion</li><li>• Taking someone's friends away</li><li>• Breaking confidence</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking negatively and loud enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>• Use of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Sexual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>• Harassment</li> </ul>
<b>6. Special Educational Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling or taunting because of SEN</li> <li>• Taking advantage of a student's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li> <li>• Taking advantage of a student's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.</li> <li>• Mimicking a student's particular need</li> <li>• Setting others up for ridicule.</li> </ul>

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. The staff member who is responsible for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the 'relevant teacher'. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying, in accordance with the antibullying *Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools* (Section 6:7.6, 6:7.7) are as follows:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- All class teachers
- Any other teacher, depending on circumstances such as Special Education Teacher (SET), Substitute Teacher, etc.

## 7. Education and prevention: Commitments

This section includes school policies and practices specifically aimed at educating children about and preventing cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying, including homophobic and transphobic bullying. There is scope, within all subjects, to *foster an attitude of respect for all, promote value for diversity, address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight that bullying behaviour is unacceptable*. (DES, Action Plan on Bullying, 2013). School-wide, values of respect are rooted in the following:

- CNS Ethos and School Values
- Restorative Practice (Positive Behaviour Policy)
- Goodness Me! Goodness You! (Patron's Programme)
- Voice of the Child at Brannoxtown CNS
- Specific anti-bullying programmes
- Staff Continuing Professional Development



Restorative Practice, explained in the Code of Behaviour / Positive Behaviour Policy focuses on key questions to examine what happened during an incident and to identify the next steps needed to repair and heal relationships:



**Restorative Practice Questions**

At Brannoxtown CNS, the focus of this Anti-Bullying Policy is on prevention.



**Focus on Prevention**

## **8. Education and Prevention Practices**

### **a. Prevention: Stages 1-4**

Raising awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour:

- Dedicated displays and posters to advertise the school as a 'bully-free zone' and to promote friendship.
- Friendship and anti-bullying slogans created by children across the school, displayed through the school.
- An Friendship and Anti-bullying Charter for Brannoxtown CNS, displayed in common areas of the school added to children's school journals.
- Development and review of the school's anti-bullying policy with children and staff at age/class-appropriate levels, through the school.
- Guest speakers to provide information sessions for parents, particularly concerning cyber-bullying for parents of older children.
- Dedicated days/weeks across the school to celebrate friendship and the school as a bully-free zone.
- Class-based development and celebration of 'random acts of kindness' towards one-another.
- Certificates and other simple rewards to celebrate children's achievements in kindness and friendship towards others.

- A Buddy Programme to support all children and to ensure younger children have an older child to talk with.
- Investment in Buddy Benches and interactive play spaces for the school to encourage children to play and talk together, ensuring all are included.

#### **b. Prevention to target Cyberbullying: Stage 4**

- Monitoring the Acceptable Use Policy and use of technology at Brannoxtown CNS to ensure access is goal-driven and supervised, as appropriate.
- Exploring and understanding the different definition of cyberbullying—a one-off posting can constitute bullying.
- Teaching students how to protect themselves online and how to report any incidents (e.g., Don't reply. Keep the message. Block the sender. Tell someone you trust).
- Promoting Internet Safety with children at Stages 3 and 4 (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class), as appropriate and celebrating *Internet Safety Day* annually.
- Inviting Gardaí and others to visit the school to discuss Internet Safety with children and with parents.
- Sharing materials and resources with parents of children in Stage 4 (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class) e.g., *A Parents' Guide to a Better Internet* (published by Webwise).

### **9. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying**

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.

#### **a. Reporting bullying behaviour**

- Any child or parent may bring a bullying incident to any teacher at Brannoxtown CNS.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

#### **b. Investigating and dealing with incidents**

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Parents and children are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible
- 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 relevant teacher 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, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
  - 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 line with the school's focus on Restorative Practice/Justice.
  - In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 parents 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 relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti- bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get 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 parents and the school;

### ***c. Follow up and recording***

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
  - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
  - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved
  - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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.
- If a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, he/she must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### ***d. Recording bullying behaviour***

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

### Informal - pre-determination that bullying has occurred:

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

### Formal Stage 1:

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

### Formal Stage 2:

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

- In cases where she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- All confirmed instances of bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The recording template must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. A teacher's records are retained in a secure space in the teacher's classroom. All report templates given to the Principal will be retained in the filing cabinet in the Principals Office.

## **10. Strategies for School Intervention and Response**

At Brannoxtown CNS, our Positive Behaviour Policy focuses on Restorative Justice which emphasises repairing the harm caused through cooperative processes. Essentially, these processes allow both the offender and offended to focus on the harm caused and the next steps needed to recover and to repair relationships. Established intervention strategies include:

- 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/guardian to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice (including interviews, questionnaires and conferencing)



## 11. Support for children affected by bullying

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for children affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience. These opportunities arise through:
  - SPHE Lessons
  - Stay Safe Programme
  - Walk Tall
  - NEPS programmes
  - School initiatives such as:
    - Anti-Bullying Week
    - Buddy system
    - Care Team Support (including Social Skills Groups)
    - Group work such as circle time
- If children require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. NEPS will also be contacted for advice
- Children should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

## 12. Policy Implementation, Success, Monitoring & Review

### a. Success Criteria

The effectiveness of this school policy, in its present form, is measured by the following criteria:

- Evidence of respect among children and staff at Brannoxtown CNS and toward all members of the school community.
- Observation of positive behaviour in classrooms, in the playground and in the broader school environment.
- Absence of bullying behaviour at our school; Brannoxtown CNS is a bully-free zone.
- Consistent implementation of the policy by all staff at Brannoxtown CNS; appropriate intervention, response and resolution, when bullying incidents arise.
- Upskilling of staff, as appropriate, to ensure teachers effectively promote positive behaviour for all children, based on research and best practice.
- Regular and robust discussion among all staff regarding the effectiveness of this anti-bullying policy and associated policies/practices to promote positive behaviour.
- Support from parents for implementing this policy.

### b. Implementation and Timetable for Review

The Board of Management confirms that Brannoxtown CNS will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent bullying or harassment of children or staff on any of the nine grounds, i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This Anti-bullying Policy applies from the 2021/2022 School Year at Brannoxtown CNS. This policy and related policies will be reviewed annually (or in line with a change in Department legislation) and amended as necessary.

### c. Ratification and Communication

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Brannoxtown CNS at their meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2021.

Following approval by the Board of Management, this policy is available on the school *Brannoxtown CNS: June 2021*



website and a print copy is provided for parents, staff and visiting adults on placement at Brannoxtown CNS. Parents will receive a copy of the policy along with the school's Code of Behaviour / Positive Behaviour Policy and agreement forms at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management, annually.

Signed: 

Date: 15 June 2021

Ms. Deirdre O'Donovan  
Chairperson

Signed: 

Date: 15 June 2021

Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick  
Principal

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