

# Threen National School

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## Anti-Bullying Policy

### Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated after consultation with members of the school community- staff, students, parents and Board of Management members.

### Rationale

Threen National School community 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). We do 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).

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.

### **Anti-Bullying Policy in Threen National School**

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 Threen N.S, 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:
3. 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;
4. Effective leadership;
  5. A school-wide approach;
  6. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
  7. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
  8. Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  9. Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying;
  10. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
  11. Supports for staff;
  12. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
  13. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

### **Definition of 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.

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

### **Personnel responsible for implementing this policy**

The 'Relevant Teachers' for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school are as follows:

1. All staff members
2. Each Class teacher can deal with reported issues from within their class,
3. The Deputy Principal and the Principal.
4. Class surveys may be carried out from time to time to monitor bullying behaviour in the school.

### **Prevention of Bullying in Threen N.S.**

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 as it applies during each school year,
- Circle time and Awareness-raising exercises explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying will be carried out by class teachers
- 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.
- Regular contact between the relevant teacher, Principal and parents of pupil in need of support.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.
- Through presentations/ information leaflets, 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 'Relevant Teacher' (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).
- Advice from National Educational Psychological Service where necessary
- Reports /letters home or through our website, parents/guardians are informed of the activities of the school 'Anti-Bullying' activities and parents are encouraged to support our work.

### **Investigating Bullying Incidents**

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The class teacher/Principal investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The class teacher/ Principal reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account 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.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to put their name to a promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The 'Relevant Teacher'/ principal does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. They emphasise 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 therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.

- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher/ Principal' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- 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 child'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 and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

### **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:

- They may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the Principal 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 Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management who will make any decision regarding the child and their position in the school.
- The relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- All records will be stored securely

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

### **Bullied pupils:**

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing 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,
- 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,
- 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.

### **Indications of Bullying Behaviour / Signs and Symptoms**

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a child is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing the route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bed-wetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers
- Possessions missing or damaged
- Increased requests for money, or stealing money
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling them.

### **Role of Board of Management**

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.

- 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.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, will published on the school website *and is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request*. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

## **Responsibilities of Principal and School Staff**

- To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school
- To draw upon Restorative Practices,(see Restorative Practices Policy) taking into account the age of the students
- To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain a safe learning environment for the whole school community
- To empower students to deal with conflict in constructive ways using Restorative Justice practices
- To take all reports of bullying seriously and to report them to the Principal if warranted
- To document any serious bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Report Form

## **Responsibilities of Pupils**

- To show consideration, respect and support towards others
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour
- To not bully others
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied
- To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour
- To feel empathy for targeted members of the school community and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

## **Responsibilities of Parents**

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy
- To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied
- To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening
- To instruct their children to tell if they are bullied or if they have seen other students being bullied
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem
- To never directly approach a student or the parent of a student at the school to intervene in behavioural issues

## **Appendix One : Types of Bullying.**

**Physical aggression:** It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It also may take the form of severe physical assault. Children play football and soccer which involves a level of physical tackling, children can trip, be tripped and fall during play, this is not to be confused with intentional physical aggression.

**Damage to property** Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's personal belongings. 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 target not promptly "paying up". Targets' lunches may be taken.

**Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation; it is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to targets can be the so-called 'look' - a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

**Abusive Telephone Calls/Text Messages or On-line Bullying:** The abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying. Inappropriate texting and on-line messaging can also be forms of intimidation or bullying. Posting abusive or insulting messages on social media sites is also a form of bullying. The school's Acceptable Use Policy gives guidelines on proper use of the Internet and other electronic media.

- The minimum age to open an account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Kik, and Snapchat is 13. For Vine, no age verification. Tinder 13 years and up. YouTube requires account holders to be 18, but a 13-year-old can sign up with a parent's permission.

**Isolation:** 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 the bullying behaviour.

**Name Calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), that hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour; most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, including race.

Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling.

**“Slagging”:** This behaviour usually refers to good natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this ‘slagging’ extends to very personal remarks, aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one’s family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil’s sexual orientation.

### Review of the Policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and *be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request*.

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Ratified By Board Of Management on (date) 21. June . 2022

Signed :



Chairperson Board of Management